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Cultural and Religious Worldbuilding

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CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS WORLDBUILDING

WPI Interactive Qualifying Project

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Abstract

This project, created by Pat Roughan and Peter Lepper, is a research-based Interactive Qualifying Project at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. The goal of this document is to demonstrate the use of focused research into existing religions as the basis for creating an imaginary culture with its own belief systems. This original research examined the histories, beliefs, and practices of Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Agnosticism, Ignosticism, Discordianism, Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Using this research, a fictional world was generated through the creation of countries and their religious beliefs. This document shows the effects of research on inspiration and realism in fictional works.

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1. Introduction

For this IQP, students Pat Roughan (Rowan) and Peter Lepper created a document on the background of a fictional world using inspirations and influences from the development of real-world religions and their effects on culture. Unlike the real world, this fictional world is imbued with undeniable *magic*. This magic, or energy, exists somewhat like air, and flows through all living things. Some persons have found ways to harness the energy, using it for feats impossible in our reality. This energy's existence is mysterious and its source unknown to the persons in the world, creating a backbone for their religious beliefs.

2. Terms in this Document

Some of the terminology used in this document refers to our fictional world and its elements. Here, these unfamiliar terms are briefly defined for better understanding of the following material. Additional detail is provided in the Background sections.

- **Energy:** The catch-all term for the abundant “magic” power that exists in the world. Its source and reasons for existing, if any, are unknown, inspiring many different beliefs.
- **Fjellgard Region:** Three adjacent countries in the far north-west, Fjellgard is considered by many to be inhospitable due to the low temperatures and mountainous terrain.
- **Reslys Region:** A series of countries on a large continent and its surrounding islands, existing southeast of Fjellgard.
- **Avenyaw:** The oldest of the countries in the Reslys Region, though its power and expanse have been severely diminished in recent eras, allowing the other countries to arise. Most of its area is filled with an expansive desert, and a majority of its citizens are travelers and merchants.
- **Resalgade:** Once a tyrannical empire of the region, it has lost its hold on the other countries and is relaxing its oppressive ways in the new era. It still remains the most militaristic areas of the region.

- **Bothi:** Known as the Intellectual Capital of the World, its citizens are mainly scholars, doctors, and other highly educated professions, with the pursuit of knowledge being its primary goal.
- **Naguor:** One of the island countries, it is a place focused on the research of energy and its effect on various technologies.
- **Sain:** One of the most energy-fuelled countries in the world, its citizens have discovered a way to create non-sentient workers from stone and other materials, called golems.
- **Ellenaid:** Created by a Sain Civil War, it is comprised of the Outside and the Fu Forest, though most countries do not acknowledge its ownership of the woodland area. It works to disrupt and alter the flow of information between the countries of the region for its own benefits.
- **Qualia:** Situated on an island far from the main region, it has extremely limited knowledge and interaction with the other countries. Its main religion, Sancsor, controls almost every aspect of the everyday lives of its citizens.
- **Desmis:** An island completely covered with jungle, it is considered a death trap for all who travel to it. Most countries have banned ships from sailing in the waters surrounding it, for fear of its crew becoming stranded on the country's land.
- **Cyclasmus:** The main religion of merchants and travelers in Avenyaw and the surrounding areas. It focuses on the way of Cycles, or repeated events. Due to existing in the large and scattered desert towns, it has many variations.
- **Trebutrois:** The ideology of many Bothans, it began with the scholars searching for a clear definition of energy in its many forms. As it spread, it became more religious in nature, until its variant Ruicism became a complete religious belief.
- **Westenjal:** The western-most country in Fjellgard, Westenjal is a vast expanse of mostly-untamed wilderness, the sheer-sided crags and dense pine forests broken up here and there with towns, fishing villages, and hunters' cabins. It is technically ruled by Nordenbach, but most of its scattered citizens don't pay much heed to that.
- **West Nordenbach:** The cultural heart of Fjellgard and the seat of its government, West Nordenbach is dominated by the massive city of Rietsza, one of the largest cities in the world. A hub of economy and trade, it connects Fjellgard with places as far off as Naguor of the Reslys region.

- **East Nordenbach:** Where the western half of Nordenbach is an economic powerhouse and the seat of government, its eastern counterpart is a major agricultural producer. Most of the country is farmland, with occasional towns or guard posts to keep the country safe and ensure the rule of West Nordenbach.
- **Stronism:** A reclusive and secretive religion based in the mountains between Westenjal and West Nordenbach. The followers of Stronism – referred to by many as ‘warrior-monks’ – are militant and fanatical, willing to go to any extremes necessary to (as they see it) keep the world safe from the dangerous influences of magic.
- **Luvica:** The prevalent religion of the Fjellgard region, Luvica is a poly-theistic religion that believes all natural aptitude is a gift from the gods, and as such one cannot do much to improve their abilities or lot in life. As such, most residents of Fjellgard are satisfied with their lot in life for the most part, even the farmhands, as they believe that is what the gods gave them the skills to do.

3. Research and Development

The entirety of A term was dedicated to researching religions, in order to provide a solid factual inspiration for the fictional history of our new world. Peter focused on the Western and Middle-Eastern religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, while Rowan researched the Eastern religions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. Additionally, Rowan looked into smaller religions and ideologies, including Confucianism, Discordianism, Zoroastrianism, Agnosticism and Ignosticism.

The research focused on books from the WPI library and informational websites. For the former, two titles, Smith’s *The World's Religions* [1] and Shaughnessy’s *The Roots of Ritual* [2], provided history and background on the evolution of rituals and religions. For the latter, the research came mainly from Google Books and websites holding records of religious texts.

The study of religions split into two groups: what do the religions preach, and how did they spread and evolve. The two are closely related, since certain types of religious preaching inspire spreading word of the religion while others are much more personal. By examining the

correlations between religious teachings and their histories, we hoped to make our fictional religions feel more realistic.

Given that the religions Peter studied are the three most widely practiced in Western culture, he didn't have to look far to find information about them. He pulled most of his initial information about their inception, development, and historical context from *The World's Religions* to establish a base of knowledge, then used sites such as an online version of the Christian Bible to fill in the gaps and to learn more about the actual content and beliefs of the religions, as opposed to how they were created and subsequently evolved and spread throughout the world.

Rowan had to do a bit more searching, due to the relative lack of focus on Eastern religions in the Western world. After getting a general idea of the evolution of the larger religions and ideologies of Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism and Confucianism from *The World's Religions*, he went to Google Scholar in order to get more in-depth knowledge. For these four religions, he also looked into the sects caused by their branching or evolution; Buddhism alone led to Jainism, Mahayana, Hinayana and Sikhism, before being widely re-absorbed into Hinduism. For those not mentioned in *The World's Religions* (Zoroastrianism, Discordianism, Agnosticism and Ignosticism), he used only web-based resources, mainly sites dedicated to explaining and gathering more followers for their beliefs. Additionally, he read some of the holy texts from Buddhism, Taoism and Discordianism, in order to get a grasp on the intricacies of faith put to the written word, as these types of documents play a critical role in the spread and evolution of a religion.

All this information was compiled into overviews of each religion, with respect to beliefs and timelines of events. Then they were examined in search of patterns which could be used when constructing our fictional religions. The patterns became most apparent when compared to religions of different origins in the world. Despite these religions appearing around the globe and different times, their evolutions over history share common traits.

An important focus of the research done for this project was how religions change over time. In all of our studies, we did not find any religion that remained unchanged for more than a few centuries at a time.

What are the primary driving factors of the evolution of belief? First, there are the ever-changing cultural norms and morals of the times. A practice which might seem perfectly normal at one time may be seen as horrible and cruel later on. To use a modern, real-life example, the practice of stoning as a form of execution among Christian countries was commonplace in Biblical times, and there are frequent references made to it throughout the holy books of that period. But nowadays, the commands to stone someone to death (for instance, for working on the Sabbath) are ignored in most areas because they clash with today's cultural beliefs, although it is still practiced in some middle-eastern Islamic countries.

Another way religion can evolve is by disagreement. When agreement cannot be reached, or when some believers want to change to fit the times and others want to stick by the old ways, the institution of belief splits apart based on a conflict of opinion, and two or more sects are formed. Sometimes, some of these sects die out. Other times, they gain equal following and all of them survive. Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are real-world examples of this dynamic.

The next step, taking place at the end of A term, was to come up with general principles that would form the basis of our major religions. Since most religions, at their beginning, can be roughly boiled down to a few basic concepts, such as Taoism's focus on the Way and Islam's belief in one God (Allah) and his prophet Muhammad, the religions in our world also spring from central ideas. Most of these have something to do with magic, as that is the defining characteristic of our fictional world. They would become the basis for larger, more complicated structures. The five general principles used in the final documents are the following: magic is evil, everything happens in cycles, there are threes in everything, magic is a gift from the gods, and magic is the spirit of the dead.

With the five general concepts which were to become the religions, time in B-term focused on taking the inception and evolution of real religion and applying it to these core ideas,

gradually refining them into full-fledged belief systems. Doing this involved adding many specifics for each religion, such as an origin, disciples, timelines of events, geographical spread, and religious sects caused by divergent beliefs.

Once all the religions were designed, the world itself needed to be created. Rowan found a randomized world generator online, and went through quite a few versions until finding one that looked like a world that could actually exist and support life. Several different versions of this map were made, including a sepia-toned 'antique' map that was later used as the base for our crafted sub-maps, and a version wrapped around a sphere for a visual aid, so one could take in what the world would actually look like at a glance. On one version of the map, geographic information, such as mountain ranges and deserts, were added, using Rowan's references from Earth's atlases and geographic information to ensure accuracy of location. Once the world was completed geographically, borders of countries and locations of cities were added, creating a complete map.

The cities and countries were just names and dots on a map at this point, so more research and background creation was needed to fully flesh out the world. Rowan researched population statistics, using medieval and renaissance Europe as a baseline, and came up with a range of populations for cities and countries. Each country got an origin, general history, and major trait, which would define its role in the world. Relationships between countries were roughed out, as well as the culture and religion of each country.

In order to add depth and scope to the world's creation and show that it could be realistic enough to immerse an audience, fictitious primary sources were added to the document during C term. These primary sources acted as documents written by persons living in the world, and showed the depth of their lives and experience in our fictional landscape.

Rowan wrote the journal of a researcher from the country Bothi, sent to the desert where Cyclasmus originated to study the origin and spread of the now-major religion. The way Cyclasmus spread, namely along the routes of merchant wagons as they travelled through the desert, not only heavily influenced the extremely variable and fractured nature of the belief

system, but also created an almost uncountable number of primary sources for stories and beliefs, which had not yet been recorded before this researcher attempted it. His document is both a record of the wheels he encountered and his personal journal during his trip across the Avenyaw deserts.

Peter wrote the diary of a child whose parents, along with half their village, were killed by Stronist warrior-monks, and who was then abducted and taken to one of their mountain fortress-monasteries, a common recruitment practice among the Stronists. That was the focus of his attention, but he also wrote a letter from one Stronist warrior to his brother, and an account by a Bothi scholar of one of the pieces of folklore of Nordenbach. He also did a quick, rough drawing of a Stronist warrior-monk, as one living in that place at that time would have done.

The remainder of this document consists of research notes and, descriptions and histories of the religions that were created, and a collection of fictional primary sources.

4. The Studied Religions

A. Religious Research and the Reslys Region

1. Buddhism

In Cyclasmus, the belief that everything happens in cycles, or that “all things have happened before and will happen again,” was primarily influenced by Buddhism. Cyclasmus began as many fractured stories and fables, written on the wagon wheels of desert merchants to grant good luck. In a time of war, many merchants hid in the town of Talrand, bringing their wagon wheels together and combining their stories into the first instance of Cyclasmus. The wheels detailed the way of Cycles, or repeating time, describing that the universe worked on a series of Cycles, from the largest of the Cosmic Cycle to the smallest, the Life Cycle. Due to its origin and way of spreading on wagon wheels across an expansive desert, Cyclasmus went through many fractures and evolutions, mixing with the beliefs of local towns and creating many

sub-religions. The original belief of Cycles became added to and edited by each fracture, creating a system of free will, morals, punishments and pleasures, deities, and a form of afterlife.

The specifics of Cyclasmus and its descendant religions are also heavily taken from the teachings of Buddhism. Cosmic Influence, or Coence, is a re-imagining of Karma, or the “law of sowing and reaping.” [1] Coence functions in a similar way, marking actions as “good” or “bad” and affecting the acting individual with these values. Reincarnation, the backbone concept for life in Cyclasmus, also exists in some forms of Buddhism, and the ability to escape these reincarnations in some way also appears and becomes the dominant goal of religious life in later evolutions of both beliefs.

Each part of Cyclasmus' evolution is related to the evolution of Buddhism and, to a lesser extent, Taoism and Confucianism. Buddhism began in northern India, where Hinduism was the dominant religion, and abandoned its deities and elaborate rituals for an atheist, self-motivated, moral-based belief. [1] The beliefs of karma and rebirth were retained in Buddhism from Hinduism, but were not the focus of belief. As Buddhism spread, sects of missionary believers began preaching differently, adding traits such as Buddha's divinity and religious temples. Over time, religious scriptures, holy relics, afterlives and the requirement of pilgrimage appeared in certain areas, still calling themselves Buddhist religions, despite Buddha's original teachings avoiding such traits. Each addition made Buddhism drift further from its simplistic roots, until some sects became so similar to Hinduism that they became absorbed by it and vanished. [4] Of these various sects, the most predominant were those that adopted their own names, separating them from the cloud of Buddhism. Mahayana and Hinayana, two major sects that are still practiced and consider themselves Buddhist teachings, survived the constant changes of Buddhism not only from their different names, but also their focus on teaching future Buddhas and Arhats, rather than laypeople as a whole. [1] Fringes of Buddhist practice evolved into Jainism and Sikhism, which only used small pieces of Buddhism to construct their main religion, avoiding re-absorption by Buddhism or Hinduism. Taoism and Confucianism experienced similar evolution; they began as basic faiths without deities or ritual, but eventually evolved into belief systems with elaborate ceremonies.

The history of Cyclasmus heavily parallels this simplified timeline of the religions. Starting from a cloud of traveler faiths, Cyclasmus took the concept of Cycles and made it the simple backbone of the belief. Once the merchants, the missionaries of Cyclasmus, spread across the deserts, their preachings became slightly altered, and over time different regions and peoples believed different things about the religion. Morals, deities, rituals and more were added to the way of the Cycles, until its most commonly practiced descendant, Cycarism, shares more traits with Hinduism and the modern versions of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism than the original Buddhism.

2. Confucianism

Trebutrois, the belief that all things are in threes, began as an ideology rather than a religion, an idea that came from the study of Confucianism. Confucianism began as an ideology, preaching ethical constructs rather than religious ones. [1] Over time, however, Confucianism began to mold into a religious form as its teaching spread from the colleges it originated from to the laypeople. Confucius became a god of sorts, rituals began in his name, and while many of the ceremonies are out of respect rather than salvation, they still heavily mirror religious events. [6] This same change is experienced in Trebutrois; as it spread and evolved, non-scholarly persons took its teachings as facts rather than guidelines, and began adding more religious-leaning teachings to the beliefs. In its final and most famous version, Ruistism, the ideology has become a full religion, complete with gods, morals, and an afterlife, while still following the rules of three. Its evolution from ideology to religion follows the same timeline as Cyclasmus, though like Confucianism, the conversion was quicker and did not cause as many branches of belief.

3. Hinduism

Hinduism is a large and extremely diverse religion, due to its large area of practice and many branches of belief. The many varieties, however, share common themes, including ideas of karma and reincarnation. [5] As explained in the Buddhism section, Buddhism began as a resistance to many Hindu practices, instead emphasizing something simpler and less deistic, but over time evolved and changed into another religion, and in some places ended up re-absorbed

into the cloud of Hinduism due to their similarities. The variety of traditions and rituals under the term is used as one of the minor inspirational points of Cyclasmus. Cyclasmus originated from the unification of a cloud of traveler beliefs, but ended up fracturing due to the large area between the cities of its desert home country. In some areas, Cyclasmus and its branches ended up falling back into being part of the general traveler faith rather than remaining its own religious belief. This series of events matches the history between Hinduism and Buddhism; while Buddhism did separate from Hinduism for a time, its evolution caused some areas to re-define the new Buddhism as another sect of Hinduism. [1]

Hinduism also acted as an inspirational stepping stone to the deities in Trideu, Trebutrois' first deistic branch. Hinduism has a large pantheon of gods and goddesses, though some areas only believe in some, one, or none of them, due to the huge variety of practices. [1] In much the same manner, believers of Trideu are aware of the many Trios of gods, but may choose their worship to a limited number, or believe in a single Trio as being one God with three parts.

4. Taoism

Taoist influences and belief served as a minor inspiration for the attitudes found in the believers of the original sects of Cyclasmus. In the original Taoism, major emphasis was placed on finding happiness through the acceptance of circumstance, allowing things to happen as they will and not fight against the Tao, or Way. [7] In the original Cyclasmus, there is no such thing as Free Will, as all things that are happening have happened and will happen again, placing all lives and actions in a continuous cycle from which there is no escape. The original Cycars accepted these circumstances, not holding evil against their fellow man but accepting that they are simply operating within their role in the Cycle, following their own predetermined Way. Taoism, like Buddhism and Confucianism, evolved to later include deities and more traditional religious teachings, which added Heavens and Hells, along with a priesthood that could save persons from the fate of Hell. [1] This change is used in Trebutrois' last branch, Ruicism, which added the three Afterlives and the interactions between the dead and the living through energy.

5. Zoroastrianism

The deistic roles in Zoroastrianism served as a basis for the creation of gods in Cyclasmus. Zoroastrians believe in two gods in constant opposition. [1] The first is Ahura Mazda, the embodiment of Good and Wisdom, who is fighting to save the world. The other is Angra Mainyu, holder of Evil and Destructive Spirit, who desires to destroy the world. Ahura Mazda is said to be destined to overcome Angra Mainyu, and at the time of defeat will re-create the world and bring salvation to all. [10] The two gods found in the deistic branch of Cyclasmus, called Corrumus, follow similar roles. Cysama, the Overseer of the Cycles, is fighting to restore damaged Cycles, called Corrupted Cycles, into being their original and pure form, called the True Cycles. Fighting against Cysama is Cyox, the Great Disruptor, who is the cause of the Corrupted Cycles and works to keep damaging and warping them further from their True form. Once Cysama completes his fight with Cyox, which is destined to happen according to belief, the True Cycles will operate without change and the world shall be reformed to the land of salvation it was intended to be.

6. Agnosticism and Ignosticism

While they do not directly make an appearance in the religious creations, Agnosticism, and to a lesser extent Ignosticism, were both considered during the region and country generation. Not all persons of a region have to follow a belief, but in a world where energy with mystic properties could not be denied, the existence of an atheist viewpoint, one that denied such phenomenon, would be much more unlikely. There would instead be a dominance of uncertainty; the energy exists, but its origins and motives, if any, either are not or cannot be known to the mortal world. Agnosticism states that some or all religious claims are either unknown or unknowable, while Ignosticism states that without a solid definition of the religious concepts to be debated, the entire discussion is worthless. [17] Both of these views could easily exist in the created world, though their names would be changed. Despite their technical existence, they do not make an appearance in the documents that follow, as this paper focuses on world-building based on religious effects.

7. Other Inspirations

The use of threes was inspired by Aristotle's constant use of the number three to categorize all of his research and teachings, from the three forms of rhetoric to the three classical unities. [18] In Trebutrois, all things in the universe happen in threes, and energy is at its best when being used in a way that can be categorized into a group of three. By sorting energy, its uses, and the natural world as a whole into the categories of three, the true nature of the universe would become apparent to scholars.

Discordianism, despite it being an interesting religion to research and compare to more traditional religions, did not have any direct inspirations drawn from it or its teachings. However, the currently undefined religion of the Qualians, called Sancsor, is viewed by outsiders, believers in Cyclasmus and Trebutrois and their various branches, as being as absurd and "non-religious" as many religious persons in the real world view Discordianism.

B. Religious Research and Fjellgard

1. Christianity

Peter's research of Christianity is most evident in the religion of Stronism, which took great inspiration from the image and ideals of the Crusaders in the Middle Ages. What began as a simple, two-dimensional idea, evolved into something more complex. "Magic is evil" needed a reason; and thus, "Magic is the essence of God, and to use it is to blaspheme against Him." This statement alone shows the roots the belief; the concept of taking the Lord's name in vain, a grave offense to the most fervent of Christians, went a step further since now there is this intangible power that they believe to be the essence of God himself.

Not everyone can agree on such a general concept, however, so there are five sects, based on the original five Disciples of Ahlstrom (the founder), each with slightly divergent beliefs that fit within the same overall framework. Aleksandrianism is the most violent and fervent of the sects, Bjarnism is followed by those who believe that God's chosen are allowed to use magic but nobody else is, Cecilism is the most forgiving of the sects, Fredrikism is the middle-ground, and Isabelism believes in protection instead of persecution.

The main, and most obvious, point where Peter's research tied directly into the development of Stronism is with the founder, Kristoffer Ahlstrom, and his five Disciples. This is a deliberate allusion to Jesus and his twelve disciples. [1] In fact, Ahlstrom died and some of his followers believe he ascended and became a purely spiritual being, a belief that is at the core of Christianity. The reverence for the martyred founder, who has become one with God through his death, is similarly inspired by Christian beliefs.

A study of history showed that the persecution of Christians by the Romans actually helped the religion grow and spread, and similar themes are evidenced in the expansion of Stronism, although in their case they brought the persecution on themselves by attacking neighboring towns. [14] Forbidden knowledge and a stigma on sorcery have long been themes in many religions -- but especially Christianity, with its infamous Inquisition and witch hunts --

and these themes are all present and reflected in the attitudes of Stronists.

2. Judaism

Luvica started with the idea "Magic is a gift from the gods," quite a diametrically-opposed view to the beliefs of Stronism. Luvica took inspiration both from Judaism, which began life as several fractious tribal beliefs that were all absorbed into one collective from which what is now known as Judaism slowly emerged, and from Greek mythology, where there was a whole pantheon of deities who were more involved in mortal affairs than the gods of today's religions. [11] In Luvica, there are five major gods: Adalbern, Frida, Gundhram, Hengist and Isolde, as well as several minor deities and spirits. They believe everyone is descended from these gods, and each person is connected to one of them more strongly than the others, which determines their strengths, weaknesses and personality. Magic comes directly from these gods, and was given to mortals as a gift, to use how they see fit so long as they are responsible with it and don't cause undue harm to others.

As to the influence of Judaism on Luvica, it goes all the way back to the origins of both religions. As the early Hebrews moved into new territories, they absorbed and assimilated the local religions and tribal beliefs, modifying them to suit their own purpose and fit better with their own beliefs. [1] Over time, the prophets and other spiritual leaders picked and chose the beliefs that they liked best, sometimes focusing on them to the exclusion of all else.

Likewise, the origin of Luvica is the conquest and unification of many fractious tribes by the warlord-chieftain Ludovicus, who blended all the tribes' religions into a central creed that could be accepted by all. The principal difference between the evolution of Judaism and Luvica is that Luvica retained all of the tribal gods, blended into a single pantheon, where Judaism slowly dropped the others and focused only on Yahweh.

3. Other Inspirations

The “gift from the gods” idea for Luvica came directly from Greek mythology. The myths and legends of ancient Greece are rife with gifts from various gods, to the point where any achievement or skill was ascribed to the person’s patron deity or the god/goddess that the skill is normally attributed to. Athletic prowess, speaking and writing ability, skill in battle, all were believed to be skills bestowed upon a particular mortal by a deity who favored them. [21] Likewise, in this world where magical energy is everywhere, the ability to channel and manipulate that energy is seen to be a gift.

The study of Islam, while quite fascinating and providing a better sense of the overall framework of religion, did not lend any specific inspiration to any of the fictional religions of this world. One can see trace influences of its iron-hard ban on blasphemy and its tradition of holy wars in the militant and unforgiving attitude of the Aleksandrianists, one of the sects of Stronism.

5. Primary Source Documents

A. Reslys Region Documents

1. Excerpt from “The Wheels Collective: A Scribe’s Journey through Avenyaw”

Foreword

Recording the stories of people long past is difficult enough when the words are carved in stone and scroll, but this project was something much more.

As a Scribe, I’ve had my fair share of piecing together broken tablets and working out strange handwriting on yellowing pages. Ancient civilizations have a terrible habit of keeping their precious educational artifacts in damp caves and collapsed rubble, making it the job of the Scribe Collective to work out their damaged and dying culture. You would think the promise of making your culture immortal would be motivation enough to keep track of your relics for those to come after.

It is for this reason that I always found myself attracted to the traditions nestled deep in the heart of Avenyaw. Their ancestors didn’t keep their legends and tales to themselves, left to rot both in the earth and the minds of their children. With a sense of pride and admiration, they put their stories for all to see on their wagon wheels, the very things that allowed them to walk the expansive and harsh deserts, between their once-glorious cities now home to Fejord and Luriti. Sure, a wheel would crack here and there, but the blowing sands are a guardian to splintered wood, and any good-natured traveler who feels the telltale bump in his wagon will return the tales to the nearest gathering place.

When my superiors told me I was expected to create a log of the merchant tales from the desert towns, I thought I was in for quite a treat. Scribing is the passion of my life, the desire in my soul, but piecing together shattered vases for months on end can wear on a man. I daydreamed of the magnificent sites I'd encounter beyond the four walls of my worn tent, and of the many people I would meet, the wheels they travel allowing me sight into their very perception of the world. What insights have their travels in the beautiful sands given the merchants that ensure the trade between countries continue without rest? Soon, I would know. With two assistants at my side to take care of the necessities of the trip, I would be able to roam the lands as the merchants do, and fully dive into their way of life.

The truth of it all can be explained as such: the desert is a harsh, ugly, unforgiving land. I thought the heat spells of Gerjel were cruel enough, but by the time I reached my starting point in Emmenis, good Author showed me the true extent of his power. Three weeks into my journey, and all I could think of was my swift return to my homeland. It wasn't until my meeting with the Head Scribe of Emmenis that I learned the true extent of my obligation: two years of my life would be spent in these revolting elements.

I will not pester the readers of this dusty document further with my summaries; I'll let my logs of the journey speak for themselves. Without any further commentary from me, prepare to enjoy the deep and varied culture of the Avenyaw Merchants.

Harry Riffin, Writer and Scribe

Day 25

Night

Desert Sands

It has been nearly a month since I left Gerjel, and a few days past a week since I slept in a real bed at the Emmenis Scribe Building. After so long with only my assistants as company (whom, I must say, fail to provide much as far as stimulating conversation is concerned), I was

understandably delighted when we noticed smoke rising into the twilight on the other side of a large sand dune. We headed towards it, and lo! a group of nine merchants, with four wagons and horses forming a circle around a small fire.

We approached cautiously, remembering Head Scribe Phamas's warning of strange rituals one is better off not watching. One man noticed us and began calling out. Calmed by the invitation, we placed our cart outside the ring of wagons, and I went right to work.

The men were rather delighted that someone not only wanted to hear of the tales on their wheels, but also to preserve them. One man, Kale Fory Domoe (I hope such spelling is correct for a man so polite as him), was particularly enthusiastic about the occupation of Scribe. He told us all a sad tale of when he lost his grandfather's wheel over a particularly steep dune. As a child he remembered the verse word for word, but in his older age he had forgotten, and once the wheel was gone, so too were his grandfather's words.

I began my work, jotting down wheels with owners, with delightful ease. After so many years of smeared ink and chipped etchings, the wheel's clean words were quite a blessing. I learned from Kale that some wheels are Siblings, meaning that they must always remain together to form a larger story.

Once I took note of every wheel and every owner, Kale's brother, Mare Esir Domoe (I must learn more of these names and their proper spelling; woefully unprepared am I!), offered my assistants and I some extra stew from their fire, in exchange for my stories about scribe-work in Gerjel. I had planned to do less talking so I could absorb as much culture as possible from these people, but unfortunately a scribe can never pass an opportunity to flaunt his experience.

I now rest under the clear skies of night, which really are the only good thing about this dreaded landscape. Sand has some form of innate desire to scratch every crevice of skin, and the Sun is in direct competition with the flames of a thousand Whisps. Once the competition ends and the winds subside, however, all that's left is the clearest sky in all the world.

Kale Fory Domoe & Mare Esir Domoe

53, Male || 49, Male

New Avin => Emminis

Wheel One (S1)

A man had travelled without rest for three days in harsh sun.

He stopped his cart by a lake to rest and cleanse his body.

Wheel Two (S2)

When he approached the waters, a maiden's voice cried out.

"Beware the deserts, brave man, the sands desire your death."

Wheel Three (S3)

He looked into the waters to see not his face, but a maiden fair.

"Come to me, and I will protect you from the conspiring earths."

Wheel Four (S4)

Afraid of his demise, he entered the oasis, and there drowned.

~Beware the tricks of heat and exhaustion~

Riffin's Notes:

(S#) denotes Sibling wheels.

Kale is a polite and learned fellow. He took up the merchant life after a fire destroyed his father's stables in New Avin. After inheriting his grandfather's wheels, he lost one on his first journey in a sand dune. He travels between New Aven and Mas, transporting wheat and barley produced by the local oasis.

Markin Set Cuma & Sed del Jonei

40, Male || 26, Male

Talrand => Lux Randin

Wheel One

*Again, and again, and over again,
May your fortunes and joy never see end.*

Wheel Two

*Two thousand eyes from one thousand lives,
Cycle on Cycle, where mortalhood thrives.
When evil slithers into your wagon of life,
Remember the Cycle will see end to strife.*

Wheel Three

If you ever come back to Lux Yawri, come by the inn, handsome! ~Reca

Wheel Four

A Fennec snuck his way onto a theatre wagon for shade, and became awfully frightened by a Face staring down at him. He looked again and realized it was only a Mask. He laughed to himself and said to the Mask “Ah, how fine you look. ‘Tis a pity you have no brains.”

Riffin’s Notes:

The third wheel got quite a laugh out of the men, and Markin claims it was put there without his knowledge by Sed after a long night of drinking in Lux Yawri. Disregarding that, the wheels show the more traditional leanings of Markin, who explained to me the basic concepts of the Cycle, as found in the many Cyclasmus sects seen in traveler culture. Sed only wished to talk about his conquest of dames, in a rather vulgar manner, and unfortunately my learning from Markin was cut short by an argument between the two of them.

Velti et Diaco, Forsey Mal Gun, & Vepa et Novi

32, Male

Lux Yawri => Uril

Wheel One

The Tree of Grace shall be Lost until Death becomes Life.

Wheel Two

Upon the Fourth Day of the Reign of Faith, in the Empire of Arms, the Dread Court shall End.

Wheel Three

When the stars fall from the sky and the Golden Gate opens, the Sword of Chivalry shall be Found.

Wheel Four

Upon the Twilight of Time, when the Sun is eclipsed in the Chariot and North becomes South, the Tempest of Avarice shall be freed.

Riffin's Notes:

Velti is a superstitious man, controlled by fears of ghosts and omens rather than any real threat. His wheels show this paranoia with strange vague prophecies. His two wagon-mates, Forsey and Vepa, appear to be more educated, but play along with Velti's tales whenever the idea of prophecies comes up in conversation. I'm sure he'll claim he "knew it would be" when something even remotely similar to one of these quotes happens.

Jex Djuemhoru & Tela Cane

32, male || 29, female

Sivni => Turi Res

Wheel One

I will travel a million miles over a billion cycles to simply hear your voice again.

Wheel Two

One day in the sands of Resalgade, a single rose bloomed without water nor dirt. The creatures of the sand dared not disturb it, but a traveler pulled it from the sand to try and sell. When he got to a town, he looked in his cart to discover the rose and all his coin had turned to hot sand.

Wheel Three

*By the fruit of his holy Cysama
Forever bound in power and soul
~Jex and Tela~*

Wheel Four

*May your Cycle be Hajal; free and pure of hardships
~Kelli Djuemhoru*

Riffin's Notes:

From a distance I mistook Tela for a man, but fortunately I never made this misjudgement known. The two wagon owners Jex and Tela are newlyweds, just joined in Cycle several months ago in Sivni, Tela's home, and making the long trip back to Jex's hometown of Turi Res. They're a bit naive about the world, as newlyweds tend to be, but I wish them best of luck with their new life together.

Day 37

High Sun

Lux Inis

I have finally made it to my first merchant town, Lux Inis. They've put up walls to keep the cursed sands out of the local drinking water from the Lux Maris Lake, so for a few days I get the wonderful break from sand in every fold of fabric I encounter.

It's much more... constructed, I suppose the word is, than I expected. The term "merchant town" always sprang to mind small crowds of haphazard shacks, thrown together from the pieces

of wagons that had outlived their purpose. This is quite a different place entirely. The builders have found a way to make a solid brick from sand and mud from Lux Maris, and the homes and workplaces constructed by them look as though they could withstand near any assault by Natural Whisps.

Tonight I will have the grand opportunity to sleep in a bed free of scratching grains, but before I can dream about such times, I must enter the town and record as many wheels as possible. My break here is a short one, jotting down my observations amidst sorting my belongings in my new temporary housing.

My assistants keep banging at my door, reminding me of my task. As if I could forget! "This is the best place," they say, "for all the travelers in the area will come through here." Such obvious statements. "You simply must come out," they yell! Do they realize who's in charge of this assignment?

Perhaps I will take a short nap before scribing today.

B. Fjellgard Documents

1. Tattered journal recovered from the ruins of an Aleksandronite temple-fortress

Name on the cover ascribes it to one 'Cristof Drescher'

I miss my mommy and daddy. I keep asking the weird men where mommy and daddy are. They say that they're "gone." I hope they come back soon. I can still see the smoke in the sky... I hope my home isn't all gone. Last time I saw it, it was on fire.

It's been three days, I think. Nobody will tell me where we're going or where my mommy and daddy are. I overheard one of the men say a funny word... blast-feemers or something. I think they were talking about my home town. I can't see the smoke any more... I think we're too far

away. I miss everyone already. Mommy and daddy and Tanya and Lady Marie and everyone else too. I hope I get to go back home someday.

It's cold up here. We've been climbing for hours. I'm tired and my feet hurt. I asked to take a rest and one of the men picked me up and carried me. I almost dropped Ivana. I don't know what I'd do without her. I don't think mommy and daddy are coming back.

We finally stopped. We're at a big stone building, like the castles back home but fancy and weird. I heard the funny word again today. Two of the men were talking, and they kept saying it. Blast-feemers, blast-feemers. One of them was very angry. He's a big man with a bushy grey beard. He's scary when he gets angry.

I can't write for very long at a time or they'll see me. I don't think they know I have this journal. They took away Lukas' books when they found us. I'm worried they'll take this away too, so I have to keep it secret. I'm hiding it inside Ivana... but if they ever take her, they'll find it, and they'll be mad.

Today the man with the beard talked to me for a long time. He said some stuff that I didn't understand, and said that when I was older, they were going to teach me to fight. I don't want to fight. I want to go home. I can't sleep up here... it's too cold, and the walls are made of stone, and mommy can't tuck me into bed at night. I want to go home.

Today, some other people came into the temple. That's what I heard the man with the beard call it. These people were dressed like the others, but the man in charge wore red and gold and seemed very important. He asked about the blast-feemers, and the man with the beard brought Lukas and me to see him. He looked at me like our cat Mr. Claws would look at mice sometimes. He's even scarier than the man with the beard.

I can't remember how many days I've been here anymore. It's gotten even colder. It snows almost every day now. I wonder if it's snowing back in my home town. I wonder if my home town is even still there. I hope my friends are still alive.

Lukas is being weird. He barely talks any more, just sits and looks out the window at the snow. He hasn't eaten since yesterday morning. I'm worried about him. He's the only one I know up here, other than Ivana of course. I hope he's okay. I remember how we used to run around and fight with sticks back home... I hear someone coming. I have to go.

The man with the beard talked to me again today. He told me that my mommy and daddy are dead. I knew that already... but hearing it out loud still made me cry. He said I needed to be strong. He said they would make me strong. But he didn't tell me how they died.

The snow is finally starting to stop. Everything's covered in white now. I asked if I could go play in the snow, but they said no. I had to stay inside. They won't even let me leave my room unless one of them is with me. I feel like a prisoner or something. Why will nobody tell me how mommy and daddy died?

I still have trouble sleeping, but it's getting better. They gave me a lot of books to read, at least. Most of them are boring, but there's one about a guy named Ahlstrom -- I got that from the book, I don't know how to say it -- who thought mages were evil and became a spirit or something. It's all in old, fancy language, and I have trouble reading it.

I think one of them knows that I have this journal. He caught me writing last time, and I stuffed it back inside Ivana as fast as I could, but he knew something was there. He didn't say anything, though. He has long, golden hair and a scar across his face. He said his name was Anton. I like him.

Anton showed me around today. He took me to something he called the relic-wary (at least it sounded like that), and it was really creepy. They had a piece of bone set into the wall, with a bunch of writing carved around it in some language I couldn't read. Anton read some of it for me. It was serious stuff about the dangers of magic and some kind of duty. I don't remember all of it.

The guy with the beard and Anton had a long talk this morning. I tried to listen in, but they were talking in a language I didn't understand. It was all harsh and rough-sounding. I think the guy with the beard was angry again. Maybe he thinks Anton is being too friendly. I hope Anton doesn't get in trouble.

Anton took me outside today. I had to stay close to him, but he showed me around the courtyard. The snow was almost up to my waist in places, but Anton showed me how to

[Some pages have been torn out]

We went to another cathedral today. That's what Anton told me they're called. Cathedrals. I think it sounds funny, but he got mad when I told him that. I don't know how long we've been up in these mountains, but I think it's summer now, because it's not quite so cold and we haven't had snow in weeks. This place is even bigger than the last one. I saw the man in red and gold again today. Anton told me he's called the Befalhavare. I don't think I'll ever be able to say that word right.

Lukas is gone. I don't know where he went, but he wasn't in the room when I woke up this morning. Nobody will tell me what happened. Anton wouldn't look me in the eye when I asked him about it. I'm worried something bad might have happened. I lost my parents, I don't want to lose my only friend too. I hope he comes back.

I don't think Lukas is going to come back. He's been gone a few days now. Nobody's said a word about him since he left.

[Ink is splattered over half the page]

Sorry about the mess. Erik barged into my room while I was writing and I had to hide the book quickly or he'd have seen it. Today, Anton and Erik took me to see the Befalhavare. He gave me a weird look and just nodded. Anton looked relieved, but I couldn't tell what Erik was thinking. Sometimes I wonder if he feels anything at all. His face might as well be made of stone.

They've started teaching me how to fight. Erik took me into the courtyard and we fought with wooden swords. My arms and chest hurt where he hit me. I don't think I'll ever be a good fighter. I don't want to fight. Why do I have to learn how to fight? Anton told me that we all have to do our duty to keep the world safe. That makes sense, I guess, but what are we keeping the world safe from anyway? I asked him that, and he gave me a funny look and said I'd learn that when I was older.

Today, everyone seemed very worried about something. There was a lot of yelling, and Anton came into my room looking scared. He wouldn't tell me what was happening, but he kept asking me if I had seen Erik and if I was ready to leave. I asked where we were going and he just shook his head. Then he told me to stay there and left. But I noticed he had his sword with him.

2. Excerpt from 'Myths and Legends of the World'

During my time staying in this land, I have discovered a number of curious beliefs and traditions most likely left over from Nordenbach's incredibly old tribal roots: for instance, some seem to believe that the stars in the sky are the spirits of the dead, living in the city of the gods; most insist that they can trace their ancestry directly -- *directly*, you understand -- to one or more of the gods they worship.

But my personal favorite antiquated legend is that of Mathias Abendroth. All those who follow the state religion around here believe magical aptitude to be a gift directly from their patron god of choice, and thus potential is inborn. A person is given a certain amount of power at birth, and can never improve their station, merely increase in skill up to the level which their god gave them. Thus, more powerful mages are said to be blessed by the gods.

Mathias, the story goes, was blessed beyond belief. From the time he was a toddler, he was performing feats that most adults couldn't do. In fact, he was so powerful that some people wanted him locked up or even killed for their safety. But as he got older, he learned to control it... and with this power came ego, as seems to always be the case.

Let me interrupt this tale to inform any readers who have not visited Nordenbach of a

peculiarity in the kingdom; just north of the city of Grimmelan is a single, solitary mountain, without even any foothills for company. It is known as Mount Abendroth, for reasons that should soon become apparent.

Anyway. Back to the story. As he got older, and became a legend for his ability to solve seemingly any problem with enough magical brute force, Mathias decided that the gods had given him this power so that he could open the path to their city for those of us stuck in the mortal world. And since their city is in the sky, he decided that the best way to do this was to raise a mountain from the ground.

Hence, Mount Abendroth. Then the gods, out of anger that a mere mortal had tried to force entry into their sacred realm, struck him down. It's said he was incinerated instantly, reduced to nothing but blackened bones in a split-second. Those bones then fused with the rock of the mountain, and his angry spirit haunts the slopes to this day.

Of course, it's all just local nonsense, but it's a quaint story. Mortal hubris and all that.

3. Personal Correspondence

From Angvald Torvasson, a Stronian warrior-monk, to his brother Kristof

Kristof,

It has been many months since I left Broktendal with these men and women who I have come to know as brothers- and sisters-in-arms. At first the cold up here was insufferable, eating through my clothes and into my very bones, but I have grown inured to it. The Befalhavare tells us that it toughens us.

How is mother doing? Is father still tending the family farm? I find myself missing home up here in these bleak, snow-choked mountains, and any news would be most welcome. As for myself, I am doing quite well despite the harsh environment. I finally feel like I have a purpose. All my life I've been drifting, lost and directionless, and here at last I have found a cause to fight for.

Tomorrow I am to leave with a raiding party on my first purge. I know you do not agree with what I am doing, but please believe me when I say these 'mages', these blasphemers, must be put down. They are a danger to us all, and an atrocity in the face of God. Perhaps our methods are

too harsh, but we must make the world see somehow. And if it takes the spilling of a little blood to achieve that, then so be it.

We march south tomorrow, into the heart of Nordenbach itself. We plan to send a message to the leaders of that kingdom, a message so clear they cannot ignore it. It will be dangerous. I may not return.

That is why I am penning this letter, I think. We have not spoken since I left, and I do not want to go to the arms of God without at least making some attempt at reconciliation with the family I left behind. Tell mother and father I love them, won't you?

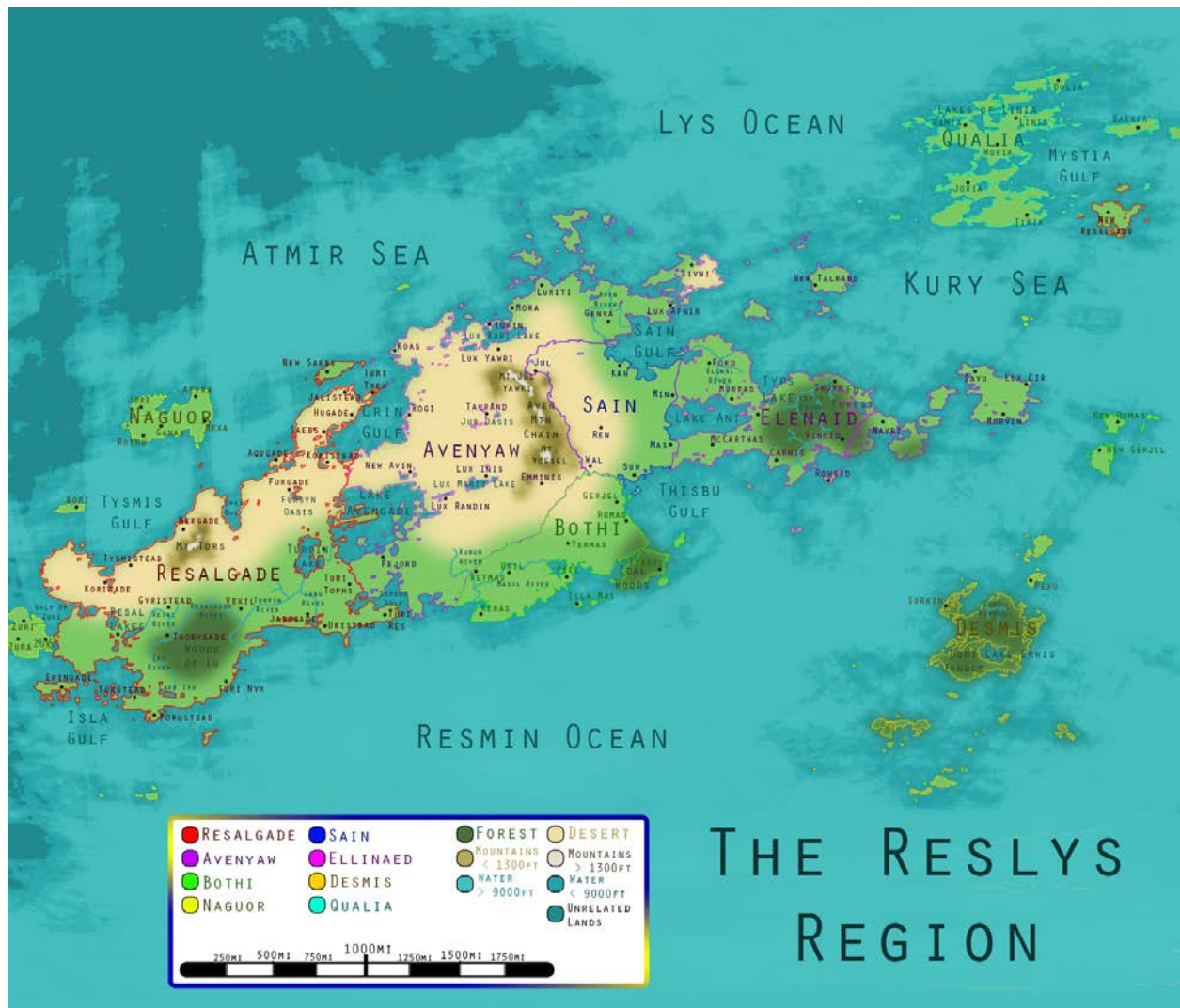
I can hear Bjorn calling the warriors for our daily exercises. I must go.

Your brother,

Angvald

6. Background Information: Regions

A. The East: RESLYS



A map of the region, showing the cities and borders as they stand in the present day.

1. Bothi



The Flag of Bothi. The two bars symbolize the Two Cities, and the laurel wreath shows the Education between them.

Known as the Intellectual Capital of the World, Bothi is responsible for much of the historical preservation and technological innovation of the Reslys Region. Its small area is mainly populated by scholars, doctors, and other educated professions.

Origin

Once a section of the Resalgade Empire, the Invasions of Avenyaw separated it from its mainland country, allowing it to separate without military conflict. Resalgade's Doctoral University of Keras attracted many scholarly students into the area before Avenyaw's invasion, turning it into a center for education. Resalgade's warlike ways and apathy for knowledge made many of its scholars apathetic to helping their home country, so when the opportunity to secede from Resalgade presented itself, the scholars defined a border with high-end explosives, declaring they would remain loyal to Resalgade and not interfere with its conflicts if they did not attempt to re-claim the land. Already at war with Avenyaw's highly tactical armies, Resalgade allowed Bothi to secede, under the conditions that they could never go to war with Resalgade or its allies and would share any military technology they discovered.

Government: Geniocracy

The rule of Bothi rests in the High Institutions of the Twin Cities, Romas and Gerjel. The system is heavily inspired by Resalgade's stratocracy, where the military acts as rulers, but their focus on intellect placed their ideal leader as one of higher education. The group of Institutions, collectively called The Nexus of Education, are the largest and most advanced of the educational institutions in Reslys. The Deans of Education for each Institution act as the main leaders of Bothi. The professors of the Institutions are the equivalent to a legislative group, observing patterns in Bothi's legal matters and conducting votes with their students, the Voice of the People, on new laws and bills to be put into effect.

Population: 2.5 Million

Despite Bothi's much smaller land area compared to the beasts of Avenyaw and Resalgade, its population per square mile surpasses both countries. This is mainly due to Bothi's immigration, which is much higher than other countries due to its reputation as a highly respected and learned area. The citizens of Bothi, from those in the Institutions to farmers in the skirtlands making city life possible, are more educated than most other persons of the Reslys Region, with a literacy rate of 64%.

Military Rank: 3/10

While Bothi does have a military from its past as a section of Resalgade, the rule of only educated scholars has left soldiers and arms in neglect. Romas, once the Military City of Bothi, became overtaken by the Institutions. This led many soldiers to instead train in Itarel, far from the judgment and hate of the main Bothi population, but also far from Bothi's borders. Resalgade has stated that any country to invade Bothi would immediately trigger war with them, but Avenyaw's place between them still puts Bothi at risk of mild invasion.

Intellectual Rank: 9/10

Education is everything to the people of Bothi. History, mechanics, energy, and almost every other subject of learning has multiple educational facilities dedicated to the exact craft. Unofficial classes of citizens are fully based on the extent of a family's education; a farm family whose members only finished Level One education, with a single grandfather having finished Level Four, would rank higher than a family whose members never exceeded Level Two.

Agriculture Rank: 4/10

Farm life is seen not as a way of living, but as a break between Levels of education, in order to calm the brain's energies and allow more learning to enter with less effort in their next Level. Because of this, Application Season for the Institutions begins right after harvest season ends, so persons going from one Level to another will work during harvest and leave when it's done to further their education. Those who are denied entry to an Institution are expected to continue farmland work through the cold months, which is seen as shame for educated persons.

Economy Rank: 5/10

While Bothi is not rich in metals or harvest, its scholarly knowledge gives it the economic backbone it needs to remain separate from Resalgade. The governments of Resalgade, Avenyaw, Sain, and Ellenaïd all pay Bothi large sums of funds to research specific sects of knowledge, and a successful breakthrough in those sects is rewarded by luxuries from each country. The scholar who makes the breakthrough is granted a place in the Nexus of Education for five years after the breakthrough, and if another breakthrough is made in that time, his time in the Nexus is extended to ten years plus however many years he had remaining previously.

Climate

Bothi's northern area is dry and hot, populated by a small expanse of desert land from Avenyaw's regions. Heading south towards the sea, it gets warm and humid, which allows Bothi's farms to be relatively successful. The Idal Woods to the south are cooler than the rest of Bothi, supported by the rains and dampness from the surrounding waters.

Notable Areas

Gerjel: One of Bothi's twin Capitals, the Twin Cities. Home to one of the Institutions of the Nexus of Education, which focuses mostly on affairs within Bothi's borders.

Romas: One of Bothi's twin Capitals, the Twin Cities. Home to one of the Institutions of the Nexus of Education, which focuses mostly on affairs outside of Bothi's borders.

Itarel: The location of Bothi's Military Training, beyond the Idal Woods and far from the general population of Bothi.

Refmas: The main Farmland Town of Bothi, connecting the many villages that line the Masil and Kurur borders. Many scholars spend their off-times in this area, putting their efforts into bettering Bothi in order to guarantee the continuing pursuit of education.

New Romas and New Gerjel: Two cities on an island far from the Bothan Mainland, only specially trained scholars are allowed to travel to them. Rumors say that the cities are actually testing grounds for huge and dangerous projects. The latest tale is that they've somehow created a metal box that zips across land on preset metal bars, turning a month's ordeal into a two day journey.

Relations with Other Countries

Resalgade: Once a subsect of Resalgade, Bothi regards them as a necessary evil to continue their educational ways. Resalgade has offered their military support to Bothi in case of invasions, but will not assist Bothi with their own military endeavors. Bothi is apathetic to the latter clause, since it has no interest in gaining land or goods by force. Resalites are seen as "barbaric and small-brained" to Bothans, and visitors from the country are often treated poorly.

Avenyaw: The reason Bothi was able to secede from Resalgade, the two are mutually kind to each other. Avenyaw, struggling with keeping its peoples together under one name and rule, hopes the historian scribes of Bothi will preserve their culture long after its inevitable fractures. Yawwans are considered "intriguingly traditional," and are treated as one would treat a child by the educated masses.

Sain: Another country on Bothi's border, their fascination with gemstones and energy over machinations and education is "crude and simple" to Bothans. Their use of golems as their worker caste is an morally-empty abuse of energetic resource to Bothans, who also debate whether or not creatures created from the energy of people, such as golems, have any form of

sentience and deserve rights of some sort.

Ellenaid: The suspicious and monetarily motivated ways of the Ellens are “morally defunct” to the Bothans, and while they do show interest in furthering education, their motivations for doing so are questionable at best to the scholars. Tensions between Avenyaw and Ellenaid have been rising as of late, pressuring Bothi to refuse any further funding for Ellen sects of research in their Institutions.

Naguor: Bothi’s rival in intellectual pursuits, the two are in constant competition for the betterment of technology, mainly in the field of Hybridization. Naguor’s use of energy for physical rather than mental progress is a “drastic mutation of priority” to Bothans, who believe in mental powers above all else.

Desmis: The mysteries surrounding Desmis and the Dori Jungle that fully covers it fascinate the Bothan scholars. The select few researchers whom have visited the outer town of Pexu report that the peoples were “strangely simple-minded” for persons in a place where almost every living thing was lethal, and the Bothans have decided to keep interactions with the country at a minimum to preserve their past-era way of life.

Qualia: Qualia’s distance from the rest of the Reslys Region, along with their abnormal watery lands and climate, has turned it from an actual country to an interesting case study to the Bothans. Its unique cultural and religious landscape are often used as comparisons for the mainland Reslys countries to make hypotheses on what parts of belief are nature versus nurture. Resalgade’s current invasions of the Lian islands are seen as a shameful attack on culture itself.

2. Resalgade



The Flag of Resalgade. It references a famous legend about the Drothyus Blade, a sword forged from the scales of dragons atop Mt. Tors.

Once the tyrannical Empire of the Reslys Region, Resalgade has fallen from its state of power, and while it's still the military power of the area, its government has relaxed its oppressive ways in this new era. Its main focus is on military pursuits above all else, training its citizens, potential soldiers, how to survive and conquer any environment.

Origin

Once part of the Avenyaw Territory, the Second Fracture left it as an abandoned state without a name or ruler, starting at what is now Gyristead and going to the western shoreline. In that town, the future First Emperor, Theybis Gade, promised the people that their new state would be the greatest country to ever exist. Backed with over a thousand men and a population of people angry at Avenyaw's government for abandoning its own peoples, General Resal launched an attack on the nearby Yawwan cities. Still suffering from the disorganization of the Second Fracture, the Yawwan army could not hold back Theybis's men, and the new country, now Resalgade, extended to the Sain borderlands. They ruled the land with a succession of increasingly oppressive Emperors, the final one being Emperor Rex Dorand, who forced his slaves to construct his palace on the top of the Jul Yawri Mountain. After his death by starvation and extended lack of oxygen, Resalgade had no heir to the throne, leading to the army segment's Generals to fight for the title. In the chaos, the Avenyaw Refugees, whom hid in Sain after the

original invasion, took back their lands with sneaky and manipulative tactics, trademark fighting ways of eastern Sain, which would later become Ellenaid. The chaos pushed Resalgade back to the west of Lake Avengade, where their current borders lie. During the chaos, a separated piece of the empire became Bothi, but without a leader Resalgade could not force their obedience, and allowed them to remain their own country.

Government: Stratocracy

The entire history of Resalgade has been marked with blood, and their government shows it. There is no longer a unified leader due to the country's long history of emperor abuse, and is instead ruled by high-ranking officials of the military. The Coat of Arms, a group of the highest officials, each rule a section of Resalgade, and must get a majority vote from the other section leaders in order to act in the country's interest. The only citizens with the right to vote are those who volunteered for a place in the military, and all citizens are required to serve in the military for six months every five years.

Population: 1.9 Million

Despite the large area of the country, military endeavors and teenage fatalities through training have stunted the population growth in recent years. From the ages of 13 to 15, Resalite youth must go through the Proof of Strength, a rite of passage through military training, which has the second use of culling off weak and disabled persons from the population. Additionally, personal squabbles are often settled with duels, which can also end in accidental deaths. While wrongful murder is frowned upon, it is not illegal, and claiming the deceased challenged the living or his honor is enough to make most parties not think twice on the matter.

Military Rank: 9/10

The entire history of Resalgade is centered on the military, and their entire sociological ranking is based around a person's ability to fight and survive. Honor is given to citizens through their number of victories in fights, from bar brawls to thousand-man battles. Bets between families based on surviving with minimal resources for weeks are common, advancing civilian training in harsh environments. Almost every aspect of an adult's life is bettered with military knowledge.

Intellectual Rank: 2/10

The large focus on physical traits, such as battling and survival, has put intellectual betterment at a very low priority. Most Resalites don't advance past Level One education, and the education they do get is rather low quality. Literacy is only expected from higher officials, who need to send written proposals to other military sects.

Agriculture Rank: 7/10

Resalites desire to be prepared for anything, especially wartime, which would mean relying on pre-harvested supplies. When not in training or actively involved in the military, most citizens actively tend to the family fields, supporting their non-military relatives with food and funds from the harvests, and saving the rest buried on the property for times of crisis.

Economy Rank: 6/10

Always on the search for a better military item, Resalgade's lands have proven rich in metals, which are ranked and either kept for arms creation or traded away, depending on their rank. They see no need for a bounty of wealth, instead opting to collect and trade items directly. They have trade routes with every other mainland country, offering material goods rather than coin, which has made them a popular trading partner.

Climate

The northern area is complete desert, hot and dry in all places but the immediate shoreline. South of Gyristead, it becomes warm fieldlands, with the cooler Woods of Lu by the southern shore. The land's moisture comes mainly from the rivers and occasional rains, so any towns not on the Resalgade River must water their crops from outside water supplies.

Notable Areas

Gyristead: The Capital of the country, it has served as a border city and place of innovation for the entirety of Resalgade's history.

Porustead and Turi Thex: The starting and ending points, respectively, of the Endurance Quest, a journey given to soldiers who desire to make their living by survival rather than direct conflicts.

Thobygade: A large preparation camp for those planning to enter the Woods of Lu.

Koristead: The main outpost between Resalgade and Avenyaw, the town monitors every cart going between the two countries by desert.

Mt. Tors: The only mountain still in Resalgade's borders, it's home to thousands of legends, the main one being the Drothyus Blade resting in an outpost on the very top.

New Resalgade: Resalgade's latest attempt at conquering new lands, they have chosen to go for the far-off land of Qualia, which has never experienced invaders or times of warfare previously.

Relations with Other Countries

Avenyaw: It's father and rival, Resalgade sees Avenyaw as a product of an old age, long outlasting its deserved time. The leaders of the country want to ensure their ability to support such a huge span of land before attacking Avenyaw's area, but Avenyaw's predicted Third Fracture would be, in their opinion, the best time to strike.

Bothi: Once a part of their mainlands, Resalites regard Bothi as a traitor country, but do not have the means to support invading the area and forcing their obedience. Instead, they give the country unneeded coin for them to further their military developments, treating them more like a slave state than a separate country.

Sain: The Sain ways of energy fascinate the Reslaites, especially their ability to create living-like things that cannot bleed or die, but consider them foolish for not using such abilities in a warlike manner. They do not see the Sain as enemies, but as possible allies in battle, especially since none of their citizens would be put at risk in the battles of such an alliance.

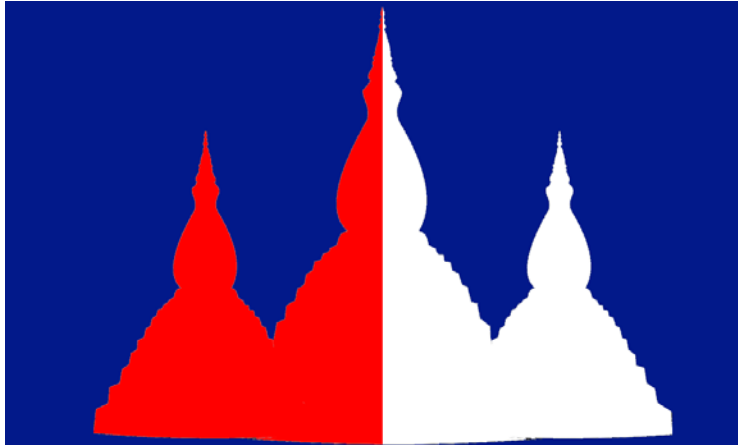
Ellenaid: The trainers of Avenyaw's Refugees in their rebellion against the Resalgade Empire, Resalgade considers their tactics distasteful and cowardly, since they prefer mind games and manipulation to man-on-man combat.

Naguor: The islands off the coast of Resalgade, their experience with mixing technology and energy innovation interests the Resalites, but doesn't take them out of their army's sights. Several uninhabited territories of Naguor have already been taken by Resalgade troops to test their defenses, and once the Qualia invasion is complete, Naguor may be their next target.

Desmis: A fascinating case in extreme environment survival, some Resalites have already sailed to the borders of the jungle islands to test themselves, only to succumb to the complete change in ecosystem and climate.

Qualia: The next target of the Resalgade armies, they believe their separation from all other civilizations will make them easy targets for annexation.

3. Naguor



The Flag of Naguor, showing the three Spires and the combination of Energy (right) and Technology (left) within them.

A series of small islands rich in energy, Naguor's lands are home to a strange metal that absorbs and channels energy in strange ways. This mix of energy with technology, called Hybridization, has caused their society to change from the mainlands both in culture and intellectual abilities, giving it more enemies than allies due to being eerily foreign to mainlanders.

Origin

Once technically a sect of Avenyaw, the Yawwan government never extended its rule to the settlers that left the mainlands due to the First Fracture, leaving the Guarans to recreate their ways of life. Time and distance from the mainlands allowed the country to evolve without immigrant interaction, though the population had to worry about the warring countries of Avenyaw and Resalgade attempting to take back the land as some sort of outpost. The discovery of Allanite, a strange metal with energy-based properties, ensured their own personal protection from the mainland countries, and gave them the freedom to pursue more experimental goals, mainly Hybridization through Allanite.

Government: Electocracy

The Capital City of Afyra is home to the Spire of Unity, where elected officials decide the laws and practices of each Guaran Island. The two other islands have the Spire of Elements and the Spire of Technology, subsets of the Spire of Unity and enforcers of the elected office's choices. Every three years, an election is held across the islands to choose the next counsel in the three Spires, but otherwise the Guarans have no say in decision-making.

Population: 0.21 Million

Naguor is located on three small island landmasses, so its population maximum is extremely limited. The small population is seen as a strength to the Guarans, whose way of life is much more intermixed with neighboring towns and cities than other countries. The “my neighbor is my brother” way of life is prevalent in all of Naguor, whose main laws center around man's interaction with man rather than other criminal acts.

Military Rank: 4/10

While Naguor technically does not have a militaristic focus, the advancements with Hybridization make it a real threat to other countries. The experience with utilizing technology and energy combined is foreign to even the armies of Resalgade, and Allanite is found only in Guaran soils. Their small army spends its time guarding the three Spires, but is confident that it could defend any attack on their shores.

Intellectual Rank: 8/10

Advertised as “a learning only found in this part of the world,” Hybridization is a constantly evolving and advancing art, and combines two completely different types of people: energy lovers and technological thinkers. The fascination with Hybridization has led many people to study in scholarly arts, so they can better understand and utilize technology and energy combined. Each learning Sect is taught in three Branches: the lens of energy, tech, and the two combined, with students choosing their path through the Sect.

Agriculture Rank: 8/10

The entirety of Naguor's lands are capable of producing good crop, so almost every expanse of

land has been replaced with farmlands to keep the country self-sufficient. Crop fields are viewed as disposable due to their abundance, so it's not uncommon for a farm to be accidentally taken out with experimental Hybridization techniques.

Economy Rank: 3/10

The Guarans have no interest in mingling with mainland peoples, even for mutually beneficial means such as trade; the only time trade happens between Naguor and another country is when it's determined a new way of Hybridization requires something that is impossible to find on the islands. Inside the country itself, it has an extremely stable economic balance, but any large-scale interaction with other countries would throw it out of balance.

Climate

The islands are all rainy and cool, making it the ideal place for crop harvests. There are very few trees natively in the land, so artificial forests have been planted to keep a stream of wood in the ecosystem. Unfortunately, the addition of non-native trees and plants during the original colonization of the islands has caused damage in the local wildlife, which is now kept in balance by Hybrid technologies rather than the natural order.

Notable Areas

Afyra: The Capital of Naguor, and home to the Spire of Unity.

Bori: The only main city on Bor Island, and home to the Spire of Elements. The land is naturally filled with abundant energy, which helps their crops greatly.

Zuri: The original city of Zuri Island, and home to the Spire of Technology.

Zura and Zuro: The sibling cities of Zuri, and the main areas of Countrywide Advancement Practices and Personal Advancement Practices, respectively.

Relations with Other Countries

Resalgade: The constant obsession with war greatly concerns the Guarans due to their proximity, but any act to showcase their power would only make them a larger target for the Resalites. They have resorted to monitoring Resalgade's endeavors on Qualia to better protect themselves from a possible attack.

Avenyaw: Their original father country, they regard the Yawwan government as sloppy and disorganized, unable to support as much area as they always seem to stumble into. The general idea that energy is negative that pervades Yawwan culture is considered closed-minded.

Bothi: Naguor's intellectual rival, Bothi's educational habit of only pursuing either energy or technology as individual units is seen as primitive to the Guaran educational elite, but they are otherwise respected for their advancements for the world as a whole.

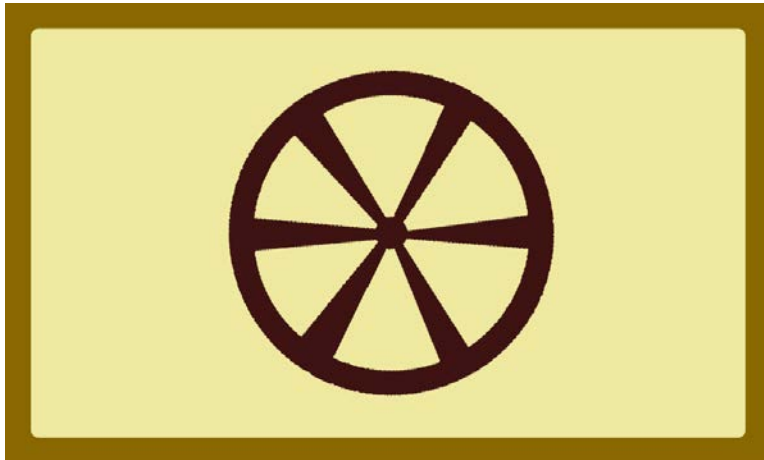
Sain: The creation of golems and other living-like energy items inspired several Hybridization advancements, but the country's rejection of technological advancement beyond mining machinery is, like Avenyaw's ignorance of energy, considered close-minded.

Ellenaid: The Ellen way of deception energy and manipulation is morally bankrupt in the eyes of Guarans, who consider affecting one's mind one of the highest of crimes.

Desmis: While Guarans have heard of the distant island of Desmis, they have not put much time or effort into uncovering anything about the distant land.

Qualia: A fellow island nation, Naguor plans to assist the Qualans against Resalgade's imminent invasion if they prove incapable of defending themselves, but otherwise leave them alone.

4. Avenyaw



The Flag of Avenyaw, showing a wagon wheel on the desert sands.

The original settlers of the Reslys Region, the country of Avenyaw is considered the Father Nation to almost every other nearby country. It has drastically reduced its power in the area due to a series of Fractures: large political shatterings that created most of the other countries in the region. The Yawwan government has never successfully held a large area of land for very long under the Avenyaw Flag, and two Fractures have already left the country much smaller than before. Other countries predict the area that is Avenyaw will soon experience a Third Fracture, breaking the country's significance in the region once and for all.

Origin

It is unknown how the people of Avenyaw got to the Reslys Region from the main continent of the world, due to boats not having been invented at the predicted point of civilization in the area. Multiple hypotheses have been approached on the origin of the first Yawwans, from ancient undiscovered boat technology to a second evolution point of mankind, but none have been proven as of yet.

Government: Monarchy “Vetocracy” / Tribalism

While Avenyaw technical has an official government in the form of the High King, almost no town or city actually recognizes his rule beyond Sivni, the actual Capital. In practice, the King's

Court can never get anything done due to a broken system of voting, and Sivni's distance from the rest of Avenyaw makes enforcing rule near impossible. The country has become a land solely constructed by trade routes between towns and countries, and the law is determined by the individual trade outposts across the area. Talrand, the origin of Cyclasmus and the largest trade outpost, is the functional Capital of Avenyaw. Currently, the towns still see their union under the Avenyaw flag, which they see as a symbol of mercantilism rather than monarchy, but predictions show that their union will soon break, especially between the main area and the separated islands to the east and north of Ellenaid.

Population: 1.4 Million

Despite the expansive lands that Avenyaw currently rules, almost 80% of it is a vast and unforgiving desert, holding only the merchant towns that provide shelter for travelers.

Most of Avenyaw's population is on the islands of Kyu and Recyc, off the eastern and northern coasts of Ellenaid respectively, where the Avenyaw Refugees hid after a war with Resalgade.

Military Rank: 1/10

The complete disorganization of the Yawwan government has almost entirely destroyed any chance at a coherent Yawwan military. Merchant wagons are expected to defend themselves in their travels, and the towns themselves have some defenses up, but the country no longer has the means to defend itself in case of a second Resalgade invasion.

The towns of Kyu Island are working to secede from Avenyaw, and have been building up their own personal military.

The peoples of Recyc Island desire to stay with Avenyaw, and are willing to do anything possible to preserve its culture.

Intellectual Rank: 2/10

There are no Institutions or pursuits of higher learning in Avenyaw. Instead, most Yawwans focus on their spiritual health and knowledge, mostly through the wheels on the traveling wagons. This method of religious transportation has kept the beliefs of Avenyaw somewhat unified over the large expanse, though the sects of each belief are innumerable.

Agriculture Rank: 2/10

Due to the huge expanse of desert in the mainland of Avenyaw, most of the land it colonizes is impossible to use for farming or homes. Towns on lakes and the shoreline have high focus on constantly producing crops to support any Yawwan who finds themselves lacking in nutrients. Despite their best efforts, starvation is still a common cause of death in the deserts, especially during the wind seasons when large sandstorms make thousands of travelers lose their way to the next town.

The Kyu Island towns, despite having a better climate for farming, are in a near constant state of famine due to their ignorance of proper farming.

The Recyc Island city New Talrand is the only main settlement on its island, so the rest of the land can be devoted to food production.

Economy Rank: 9/10

The only thing that Avenyaw has keeping it together is a consistent and region-wide economic system. Its borders hold almost every major trade route, and the merchant's unwritten laws make them the best traders to interact with for members of every other country. Despite their reluctance to admit it, the fall of Avenyaw would destroy trade between every other country, taking a toll on the region-wide economy.

Climate

The main expanse of Avenyaw is hot, dry, and relatively deadly desert lands. There is a small bit of grasslands to the extreme north and south, but even these sections of the land struggle with drought and heat. The separated sections on Kyu and Recyc Islands are much better off, with rain and cool weather year round.

Notable Areas

Sivni: The technical Capital of Avenyaw and home to the High King, though its significance is often unknown or ignored by the country as a whole.

Talrand: The functional Capital of Avenyaw, it's the largest trade city of the land and home to many religious evolutions.

Jur Oasis: The water source of Talrand, and considered blessed by most religious sects.

Koas: The largest coastal town and major supplier of crops, it is the center for moralistic advancement for the Yawwan merchants.

Kyu Island: A separated section from the rest of Avenyaw, it holds three towns and one city. The people of the island plan to secede from the rest of the country.

Recyc Island: A separated section from the rest of Avenyaw, with the single city of New Talrand on its lands. The natives consider themselves the Next Generation of Avenyaw, and have sworn to preserve the ways of Old Avenyaw.

Aven Mountain Chain: The country's main defense against countries to their east, hundreds of ruins remain among the steep cliffs. Sain treats the eastern side of the mountains as their own land, despite it being in Avenyaw's official borders.

Relations with Other Countries

Resalgade: Once a section of Avenyaw, then a rebellious state, and now its own country, the Resalite way of fighting everyone who shows weakness is seen as dangerous and foolish to the Yawwans. The fracture between government and civilians has left them a huge target for further invasion, but the local peoples are reluctant to accept their current state.

Bothi: The two countries regard each other as kindly neutral, since Bothi is grateful for Avenyaw allowing it to secede from Resalgade. Some Yawwans, aware of the inevitable Third Fracture, have paid Bothan scholars to record their beliefs and culture before it is lost forever.

Sain: Sain's reckless use of energy disturbs the Yawwans, especially when they create lifelike beings to do their slave labor with their abilities. Sain sees the Aven Mountain Chain as their personal mining territory, and despite it technically being in Avenyaw bounds, there is not enough border preservation to enforce it.

Ellenaid: Avenyaw's allies during the Resalgade Invasion, the two, despite having very different views on life, are allies. The piece of Avenyaw situated on Kyu Island plans to become a sub-country under Ellenaid after seceding from Avenyaw's main country.

Naguor: Like the view on Sain, Naguor's stance on energy use is disturbing to Yawwans, who disagree with energy use. The two are in hard standing due to Naguor's history as an abandoned sect of Avenyaw, and some Yawwans worry that Naguor will go the way Resalgade did and attempt some sort of revenge.

Desmis: Far away and rather deadly, Avenyaw sees no reason to concern themselves in a place where a wagon wouldn't be able to make it five minutes.

Qualia: Distant from the lands that Avenyaw has ruled over its many years, the Yawwans do not have interest in contacting peoples from across the seas.

5. Sain



The Flag of Sain, showing the mining tools, used to get materials for golems, surrounded by energy.

Masters of energy use, Sain is a result of Avenyaw's First Fracture, and created Ellenaid through its own fracturing. Their society is based around a working class made from golems, lifelike beings made from nonliving material through the use of energy. A general laziness pervades the land, and energy is used for any and every problem the citizens of Sain encounter.

Origin

During the First Fracture, Avenyaw's borders were spread too thin to properly govern all their citizens, and the abandoned area to the east of the Aven Mountain Chain went into a time of chaos. Clans of people banded together to fight against each other in the years of disarray, and the small remaining organization in Avenyaw chose to move their official borders to the mountain chain, leaving the Clans to settle their problems without the struggling Yawwan

government needing to get involved. All the now unclaimed land to the east of the Mountains became Sain, and the fighting continued for many years, with tribes perfecting their ability to use energy in order to better fight and protect. The Jul Clan single-handedly stopped the fighting when they discovered a way to make disposable soldiers: golems. The tribes stopped fighting in exchange for knowledge on golems, and have now developed a system around the beings.

Government: Magocracy

The country is divided into seven States, each with the original Clan of the area acting as the main city for the State. Every year, the States each put up their top Mage, voted for by the people, for participation in the Sain Games, a series of increasingly dangerous events that test every aspect of energy use. The winner/survivor of the Games becomes the Archmage, ruler of all Sain Clans.

Population: 0.79 Million

This population count of Sain only includes living persons, and do not count the near 300k golems regularly employed by the Sain, which make up around 40% of the general population. The Sain's working class has been almost entirely replaced by golems, which only require mild repair every few weeks. The golems learn from each other, with new ones watching the old ones as they do the menial tasks they're assigned, so the Sain usually do not know how to tend to crops and other tasks generally expected of a working class.

Military Rank: 7/10

With the additional free time given to the Sain by not having to work for food or housing, the Sain mages can choose to spend their time fully practicing their energy use, making them the best users in all the Reslys Region. This, in addition to their ability to generate expendable golem soldiers and their war-based past, makes them a large threat in the field of battle. The Sain have made it very clear that anyone who tries to scorn them or their allies will be entirely conquered.

Intellectual Rank: 6/10

The mental capacity needed to use energy in the way of the Sain means that puzzles and riddles are extremely popular among even the more uneducated mages, and a full energy education is

required of anyone who wants to be more than a golem monitor. Schooling is much more relaxed than in the intellectual countries of Bothi and Naguor, with classes being taught by local Sens Mages, experienced mages who dedicate their time teaching others of their State.

Agriculture Rank: 5/10

The crop fields of Sain are tended to by golems, and while a less-experienced golem can destroy an entire field single-handedly, they are much more efficient than normal workers. Half of Sain is near uninhabitable desert, but the eastern side, especially near the seas, is used for crops. Thankfully golems require no food, so all the supply can be given to the living population.

Economy Rank: 8/10

After golems, the thing Sain is known for is an abundance of metals and gemstones from their bountiful mines. Golem miners work day in and day out extracting all the metals and stones they can find, which are then used as building scrap or for trade. The Sain purposefully withhold revealing how much supply they find with their golems, in order to keep the prices for their materials high.

Climate

The western border of the country is part of the Reslys Region's expansive desert, making it hot and dry, but the air cools down toward the eastern side. The dampness from Ellenaid's woods lingers around the border, but the land is otherwise dry, and water is transported from the shoreline to the inner lands in times of crisis.

Notable Areas

Jul: The main Mining Town of the country, and the source of many metals and jewels in the local economy.

Mt. Jul Yawri: Home to ancient ruins and thousands of mining tunnels, the Sain use their golems to travel up beyond where they may travel due to oxygen.

Aven Mountain Chain: While technically in Avenyaw's borders, the Sain treat the eastern half of the chain as their own, stripping it of metals and gems.

Kah: The origin of golems and the City of Games, where the Archmage resides.

Relations with Other Countries

Resalgade: The Resalite's way of steel before energy is seen as primitive to the Sain, who believe that war will always be won with energy rather than blade.

Avenyaw: The neglectful father country of Sain, they treat the lands of Avenyaw as unclaimed, settling camps and mining lands that technically fall within their borders.

Bothi: The Bothan love of education is pleasing, but their mild lack of full energy education is seen as a disappointment to a land that claims to be the Intellectual Capital of the World.

Ellenaïd: Their child country resulting from a civil State war, their ways are seen as underhanded and repugnant, though their use of energy is interestingly different than other countries.

Naguor: The mix of technology with energy is fascinating to the Sain, and they are very interested in using Allanite with their golems, but trades still have not been established with the Guarans.

Desmis: Far but interesting, the Sain are working on golems that can last months without a repair in order to fully explore the deadly land.

Qualia: The Sain have heard rumors of a war being fought on a far-away island, but they have chosen not to look further into it, instead focusing on creating the perfect small country.

6. Ellenaid



The Flag of Ellenaid. The eye-keyhole symbol is only visible when light is shining through the flag; it is otherwise not drawn or indicated on official documentations, though it is commonly used to indicate Ellen hideouts in other countries.

Once the eastern part of Sain, a civil war over the uses of energy caused a split right down the middle of the land. Now the lands of Ellenaid, only three main towns, Ford, Murras, and McCarthas, are officially recognized as Ellenaid, and the rest of the area is either considered part of Avenyaw or unclaimed territory. The Fu Forest, however, is actually part of Ellenaid, and filled with people who are strange and disturbing to the few outsiders who are aware of their existence. The forest people's main methods of behaving and fighting revolve around using energy to collect and disrupt the flow of information, both written and mental.

Origin

During one of the annual Sain Games to choose a new Archmage, the two final competitors were Mage Jasmine from For, now Ford, and Mage Lorian from Wal. During their final competition, taming and capturing a mountain lion in a stadium ring, Mage Jasmine instead aimed her mental energies at Mage Lorian, causing him to run towards the lion and be brutally slain. As the survivor of the games, Mage Jasmine technically became Archmage, but the citizens of Wal refused to accept such underhanded tactics. The disagreement expanded into full war, but not in the way Sain expected: instead of weaponry and clashes, people started becoming paranoid and

insane, with entire towns killing each other instead of any visible enemy. This strange and frightening tactic led to Sain's quick surrender, allowing the lands east of Ford to follow Archmage Jasmine while a second Games would choose a new Archmage for the western half. Archmage Jasmine declared their secession from Sain, creating Ellenaid.

Government: Kratocracy (non-forest), Cyberocracy (forest)

Outside the Fu Forest, the city of Ford has the Circle of Power, a group of persons who, hypothetically, rule over all of Ellenaid, but in reality only have real power over the non-forest. The Circle consists of whoever manages to convince a previous Circle member to step down. This convincing can be bribery, blackmail, threats, or anything that will get the member to leave the Circle. The only banned way of getting a member to leave the Circle is murder.

In the Fu Forest, there are no official leaders, but whoever has more knowledge of the world around them has unofficial power over the area due to their way of life.

Population: 1.2 Million

The non-forest towns and cities are home to most of Ellenaid's official population. Their peoples believe in superiority of mind above all else, following Archmage Jasmine's example of doing anything to win, such as bending rules and searching for every possible loophole. Laws are written to be as foolproof as possible, but many citizens try to search for loopholes in order to behave however they want. The laws around law enforcement, however, are rather lax, leading to a somewhat corrupted enforcement group.

The people in Fu Forest mastered Archmage Jasmine's energy mind tricks, and secretly control happenings in and around all of Ellenaid. It is said that being a Fuan, a member of the Fu Forest, is a state of mind rather than a place, and that many Fuans have already organized themselves around the entire Reslys Region for information gathering.

Military Rank: 6/10

Ellenaid's military rank is based not on people with sword and shield, but on the dangerous potential of each citizen. Raised in a world of tricks and deceit both in and out of the forest, a war against the Ellens is completely different than a traditional war, and most countries would not know how to deal with its tricks. It's hypothesized that, if a country did declare war, Ellenaid

would immediately surrender and mix with the invading country, then take it down from the inside out through countrywide misinformation and general chaos, returning to their woods when the country was completely fallen.

Intellectual Rank: 4/10

Formal education is not an Ellen priority; they instead focus on street smarts and the ability to get in and out of tricky situations. The ability to gather information, read people, disrupt mental and written passing of information, and alter situations to one's benefit are key skills for people of Ellenaïd, especially Fuans. There are traditional schools in the non-forest towns, but towns in the Fu Forest have no official institution at all.

Agriculture Rank: 9/10

Unlike many other countries on the mainland, Ellenaïd's borders have no desert land, so crops are much more viable for feeding an entire population. The Fu Forest also natively grows many fruits and berries that cannot be found anywhere else, which serve as the food for the Fuans, so they may eat without revealing themselves through cropyards.

Economy Rank: 2/10

The main thing keeping Ellenaïd's economy stable is its exports of the Fu Forest plants, which cannot be found anywhere else in the Reslys Region. Thievery is rampant in all parts of Ellenaïd, with the pervading thought of "if it's not nailed down, it's mine" in its citizens. Countries are reluctant to directly trade with an Ellen due to their reputation for trickery.

Climate

The western side of the country is warm but damp, with temperatures falling towards the east. The general humidity from the seas and lakes surrounds the entirety of the land. These temperatures guarantee water across the region, so the chance of drought is never a concern, and plants are constantly self-hydrated.

Notable Areas

Ford: Once the Sain town of For, it's the official capital of Ellenaid, and the location of the Circle of Power.

Lake Ani: A lake between the north and south of official Ellenaid, its eastern edge marks the official border of the country.

Fu Forest: The hiding place of the Fuans, a group of mind-bending energy users who use their abilities to uncover and control the flow of information in all parts of the region.

Relations with Other Countries

Resalgade: The Resalite's lack of protection against intellectual corruption amuses the Fuans, who believe they could destroy the country from the inside out at a moment's notice.

Avenyaw: The broken and fractured way of Avenyaw makes it easy to manipulate for even low-level Fuans, and their wagons make good targets for theft by the Ellens.

Bothi: Bothan intellect proves to be quite a challenge for Ellens and Fuans alike, but corrupting their research would grant huge benefits across the entire nation.

Sain: Still afraid of the ways of Ellenaid, the Sain are difficult targets for manipulation due to their constant suspicion of any traveler from their eastern border.

Naguor: Easier to infiltrate than Bothi but much farther away, very few Fauns and Ellens even attempt to enter the informational circuits on the island nation.

Desmis: Without proper society, Desmis is not an interesting target for Ellens or Fuans, though a few have decided to try and manipulate their country's development.

Qualia: Now that Resalgade has chosen to provoke them, many Fuans have entered the area to investigate the Resalite and Qualian fighting styles.

7. Qualia



The Flag of Qualia, resembling the legendary Qualin in the form of the Qualia Islands.

A land separated from the rest of the Reslys Region for many generations, the cultural landscape of Qualia is completely foreign to the other countries of the region, and is only considered a part of the Reslys Region due to a recent invasion by Resalgade. A people of myths and destiny, their way of life is based around the concept of Holy Honor, a trait of their extreme religious leanings.

Origin

During the early stages of Avenyaw, when it coated the entire mainland of the region, the ocean faring boat was invented. Crude and flimsy things, the boats of old couldn't withstand extended trips on the ocean, so the furthest anyone dared travel was to the islands directly off the coast, jumping between them to make longer journeys. As Avenyaw began to struggle and show signs of the First Fracture, some fearful Yawwans decided to take all the boats they could find and sail out to the ocean, searching for somewhere new and safe to resume their lives. Many boats sank, others starved, and others still became lost as they drifted across the sea. One day, the large vessel Agorana washed ashore on a strange island land. The people exited the boat, ecstatic to be on dry land, and saw the silhouette of the fabled Qualin watching them from inland. Blessed by this sighting, the people took residence on the island, and named it Qualia after their holy protector creature.

Government: Theocracy

The dominant religion of Qualia, called Sancsor, is fully ingrained in all of Qualian life, and their government is no different. The Holy Houses of Sancsor in individual towns make choices for their local towns and land, and the Holy House of Sancsor in Tiria, their Capital City, takes in Holy Workers from each town to make nationwide choices.

Population: 0.46 Million

The population of Qualia is not limited by its food or space, but by its original population. While families are encouraged by the ways of Sancsor to have as many children as possible, later years have shown an increased chance of accidental inbreeding due to the only genetic variations in the country being from the original ship settlers. Families in Qualia are abnormally large, some with several hundred comprising them, but the Sancsor way of “making a way for oneself” means that family is not expected to help family with their struggles. The very individualistic mindset is further emphasized through the idea of Holy Honor, the way people make connections with gods and spirits and choose one of their Possible Destinies.

Military Rank: 2/10

Distanced from the rest of the developing world, Qualians had no reason to ever form an actual military, but their myths and legends have taught them how to defend their own homes from attack. Compared to the rest of the Reslys Region, Qualia has a home-field advantage with invaders, since their entire landscape is cool and damp, unlike the mainland’s desert climates.

Intellectual Rank: 3/10

Attendance at the Holy Houses replaces schooling, so the average Qualian is much more versed in the Sancsor way rather than reading and writing. Due to their distance from other countries, are still several generations behind the current technologies, but what they have discovered are unique to their lands. Many of their crude inventions are based around the many uses of fire and water, mainly their combined creation of steam. Lately, Qualia has been working on a large device that uses steam to propel stones at high speed through a pipe.

Agriculture Rank: 6/10

The watery environment of Qualia makes it a great place for crops that many other of the region's countries could not create themselves. Qualian farmers never have to worry about bringing water to their fields, and usually only tend to the crops during the planting and harvesting month, leaving the plants to fend for themselves for the rest of that time.

Economy Rank: 4/10

Qualia does not trade with any other countries, but the trade between Qualian cities is relatively balanced. Most of a layman's funds end up going to the Holy Houses, which double as both a religious and governmental unit, allowing the Holy Houses to do whatever they please with the lands and laws.

Climate

Distanced from the equator and desert expanses of the mainland, Qualia is cool and wet, with the rainy season taking up most of the year. The people and plants have learned how to live in harmony with the near constant rains, and their homes are almost entirely waterproof. Qualia is the only country in the Reslys Region that experiences snowfall at sea level during the winter months.

Notable Areas

Tyria: The original settlement near where the Agorana washed ashore. The ship itself is still preserved next to the town's Holy House of Sancsor.

Lakes of Linia: According to legend, each lake holds a different Worldly Spirit, which will rise to defend Qualia at the end of the world.

Relations with Other Countries

Resalgade: The first invasion on their lands, the Qualians see the Resalites as unholy demons attacking the land they were deemed worthy of by the Qualin. They expect that the land itself will rebel against the invaders, purging the unchosen from the islands.

Qualia does not know of any other countries, and therefore has no relations with them.

8. Desmis



The unofficial Flag of Desmis, created by Bothans as a way to convince scholars to not travel to those lands.

Often called the “deadliest land of the world,” Desmis’s borders do not mark an official country, but instead a perimeter around a land where very few can survive. Most of the area is covered in the Dori Jungle, which is home to thousands of toxic plants and animals. As a famous Bothan scholar said: “It’s a land where everything wants to not only kill you, but torture you. Do NOT go there.”

Origin

Nobody knows how the very few people of the land got there, or how they managed to survive. It’s hypothesized that some of the boats that left Avenyaw before the First Fracture ended up there, but no one has tried to test this theory.

Government: N/A

There is no government for the land, and the few tribes that do exist work on a “if you survive, you can help us make choices” basis.

Population: N/A

There are very few people who not only have made it to Desmis, but also survived its strange

and lethal ecosystem. Almost all their time is spent hunting and gathering food to make it to the next day.

Military Rank: N/A

Desmis has no military, but they don't need one; the land itself is an extreme defense against the other countries.

Intellectual Rank: N/A

Every day is based around preparing for the next, so there's no innovation with energy and technology for the Desmis residents.

Agriculture Rank: N/A

The lands are covered in harsh jungle, meaning that there's no area to plant crops or raise animals. The tribes rely on hunting and gathering to survive.

Economy Rank: N/A

Tribes are too focused on survival to generate trade routes or monetary units.

Climate

Dark, damp, and hot, the jungle is almost as harsh as its inhabitants.

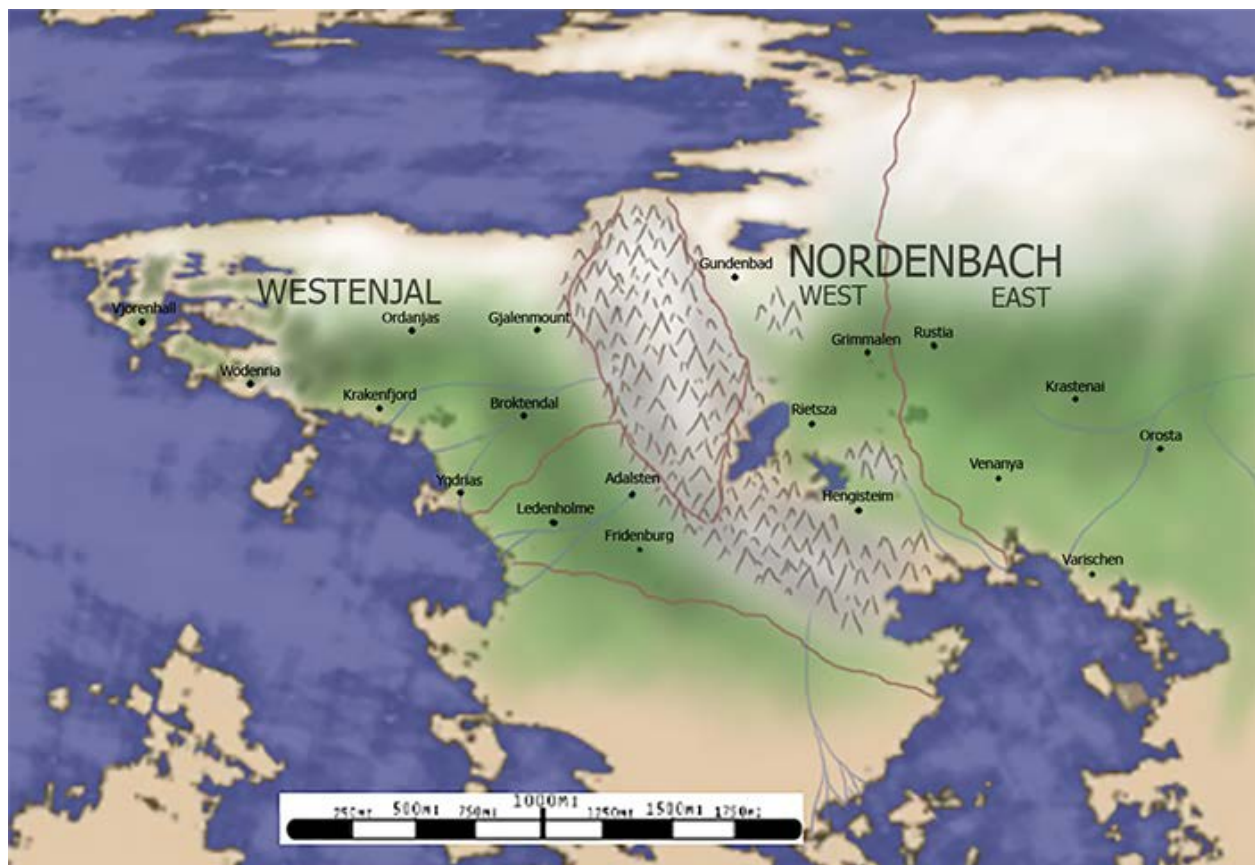
Notable Areas

Rumu Rivers and Lake Erwis: The only constant supplies of fresh water in the jungle, it attracts tribes and predators alike.

Relations with Other Countries

Desmis knows nothing about other countries, so has no relations with them.

B. The West: FJELLGARD



A map of the region, showing major cities and the current borders.

1. Westenjal



Thought by many to be a backwater or underdeveloped region of the world, Westenjal is a brutal and unforgiving land of sheer cliffs, jagged rock, frigid tundra and thick pine forests. While the harsh terrain and freezing temperatures make it hard to build up any sort of agriculture, it breeds some of the toughest men and women around.

Origin

The first settlers in Westenjal came from the southeast, fleeing from a tribal war. They slowly spread across the harsh land, settling down in the southern half where the chill wasn't quite so brutal. At first there were only a few isolated hamlets; little fishing villages that housed a couple families, cabins in the woods, and so on. But slowly over time these spread out as more wanderers trickled in from the south, and the hamlets grew into towns.

The scattered citizens of Westenjal were overcome by the army of Nordenbach as the kingdom expanded, and the country was subjugated in a long a brutal war as the better-trained and better-armed soldiers from the east struggled through the harsh terrain and fought against the bitter cold. It took almost a year, but eventually the entire country came under the control of the kingdom. But to this day, it is a shaky and uncertain control, and the people of Westenjal pay only the loosest of homage to their 'lords'.

Government: It's Complicated

Westenjal is, technically speaking, ruled by Nordenbach. They have no overarching government of their own, but each town has an elected official that oversees its day-to-day operation. In

times of war, the leaders of all the towns come together to form a ruling council that makes decisions for the country as a whole.

Population: 0.4 Million

The frigid climate and harsh terrain make most of Westenjal uninhabitable by most peoples' standards, so even though the country is decent-sized, population is low and almost everyone is clustered in a few big cities. Krakenford and Ygdrias are the two largest, nestled on the southern coast in the slightly-less-cold part of the country. Between the two of them, they account for between thirty and forty thousand people, with Broktendal, Ordanjas and Gjalenmount following behind at around ten thousand a piece. Most of the rest of the population is scattered among small villages and cabins in the wilderness.

Military Rank: 6

Everyone in Westenjal is tough, hardened from birth by the frigid climate, harsh terrain, and terrifying assortment of wild beasts. Trained from a young age in how to cut trees for firewood and fight off bears and wolves, they frequently get in bar brawls for fun, and consider fist-fighting to be a natural and effective way of resolving disputes. But the near-total isolation of individual towns and low population of the country prevents them from having much in the way of an organized military, so they can't really bring this fighting spirit to bear offensively. Defensively, however, they are masters of guerilla warfare and know how to navigate the natural perils of their country perfectly, which is why the army of Nordenbach took a full year to conquer them.

Intellectual Rank: 3

The people of Westenjal have more important things to worry about than reading books -- such as not being eaten by a bear while out gathering food and firewood. As such, the only places where anyone even approaching 'intellectual' can be found are the coastal cities, where the dense population allows some people to focus their attention on learning.

Agriculture Rank: 1

Between the sheer cliffs, barren wastes of snow and rock, steep slopes, and thick pine forests, the

prospects for farming in Westenjal are negligible. A few areas around Krakenfjord and Ygdrias are used as farmland, but harvests are always slim and make up for less than ten percent of the city-dwellers' diet, leaving nothing leftover to sell.

Economy Rank: 4

Despite the nigh-impossibility of farming among the fjords and snow-swept slopes, Westenjal still manages to have a passable economy due to the export of furs and other animal products from their abundance of carnivorous wildlife. Having the hide of a bear from Westenjal as a rug on your floor is enough of a draw to keep their trading economy afloat, if not competitive.

Climate

All of Westenjal is cold, the only question is how much so. The northern half is a snowy waste, where it blizzards more often than not. Nobody but the bravest, most hardy, and craziest lives on those desolate slopes. The southern half, while still cold, is habitable -- but just barely. During the winter-time, they too are neck-deep in snow, but it usually melts by the end of Spring.

Notable Areas

The cities of Krakenfjord and Ygdrias are surprisingly large for the population of the country, and could almost be called bustling. Large harbor towns, they are the centers of trade with other countries, and constantly bear traffic from all over the country in the form of hunters looking to sell their wares, or travelers looking for shelter.

Along the northern coast, where it gets so cold that it should you spit, your saliva would freeze before it hits the ground, there are the ruins of fortresses, mysterious and unfathomably old, from some extinct civilization. They have been abandoned for countless centuries, and as of yet nobody has been able to figure out who their previous tenants were.

2. West Nordenbach



The industrial, commercial, and residential heartland of the kingdom, West Nordenbach is a shining example of modern society, at the cutting edge of technology with the latest imports from Bothi and one of the largest single cities in the world. It's military is well-organized but not exceptionally strong, as it maintains a mostly peaceful relationship with the countries around it, only resorting to military force when it wants to expand and a prospective conquest refuses its offers of money and societal advancement.

Origin

A very long time ago, in the mists of antiquity, the lands now known as Nordenbach were occupied by a group of fractious tribes who all believed in different gods and warred amongst themselves frequently. Then the chief of one of these tribes, a mighty warlord named Ludovicus, decided that it was his destiny to unite all the tribes under one banner. After almost a decade of conflict, he did. Those he could not win over through political means he conquered through brute force, until eventually the entire country was under his control. All of the various religions were absorbed and transformed over the years, and the first major city, Rietsza, was founded. As they met immigrants and travelers from all over the world, they slowly absorbed their culture and traditions until Nordenbach became something of a polyglot, with scholars from the south rubbing shoulders with barbarian warriors from the north and everything in-between. It is this diversity that has allowed the country to expand and thrive.

Government: Monarchy / Republic

Nordenbach is somewhere between a monarchy and a republic, since the whole kingdom is ruled over by a King or Queen (Ludovicus was the first King of Nordenbach), but the political power of the monarch is limited. They only take complete control during wartime -- the rest of the time, their power is balanced by a council whose members are democratically elected.

Population: 4 Million

West Nordenbach is incredibly densely populated. There is barely an inch of ground outside of the mountains that is not part of a town or city, and the major cities are enormous sprawls that bleed into the smaller towns around them until it's almost impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins.

Military Rank: 7

Nordenbach's army is large and well-organized, but the people live a life of relative luxury and seldom get into fights outside of military engagements. As such, the army of West Nordenbach relies more on its siege engines and tacticians to bring victory, rather than simple strength of arms. That said, with such a large population they are not above throwing bodies at a problem to solve it.

Intellectual Rank: 6

West Nordenbach is a giant melting pot for people and cultures from all over the world, and their diverse knowledge is a great boon to the city. While nowhere near the level of Bothi, West Nordenbach holds its own and pumps out a few inventions every now and then.

Agriculture Rank: 3

Since the majority of the arable land in West Nordenbach is devoted to the enormous cities, there aren't many farms and most of their produce is imported from East Nordenbach. There are a few farms here and there, but most of the food they produce goes to the military.

Economy Rank: 9

Because of its vast size, cultural diversity, and connection to other countries all over the world, West Nordenbach is an economic hotbed. Furs from Westenjal, food and crops from East Nordenbach, and dozens of other commodities from countries as far away as Sain.

Climate

The southern areas of West Nordenbach are relatively temperate, at least when compared to the areas to the north and west. Before it was dominated by massive, sprawling cities, the area was a mix of pine and deciduous forests nestled at the base of the mountain range that splits the country in two. But to the north is a subarctic wasteland of snow, ice, and rock that very few inhabit, with one exception -- the city of Gundenbad, built in the middle of the tundra.

Notable Areas

Rietsza: the largest city in the country -- and one of the largest in the world -- the massive urban sprawl known as Rietsza contains within its borders almost 150,000 people, although estimates are a little hazy since it's hard to tell where the city ends and its border towns begin.

Gundenbad: built to show their dominance over the natural world and the elements, the city of Gundenbad is home to the toughest, craziest, or most adventurous that West Nordenbach has to offer. Citizens brave freezing temperatures, frequent snow, sleet, and hail, in exchange for isolation and almost complete safety; not only would it be hard for anyone to attack the city through the snow and ice of the tundra, but the city itself is essentially one giant fortress, built to withstand any attack. It also serves as a place for the monarch to retreat to, should Rietsza ever come under siege.

6. Background Information: Religions

A. Reslys Religions



1. Cyclasmus

a. General Cyclasmus

The Cyclasmus (Psy-class-mus) religion, one of the oldest religions that is still widely practiced, is believed to have been founded very soon after the invention of the wheel. The followers of Cyclasmus, often shorthand to Cycars, believe that everything follows a cycle with minimal, if any, change. The majority of Cyclasmus followers still live as travelers and merchants, retaining the wheel-writing traditions that spread the religion originally.

The Founder: The Merchant Travelers

Merchants across the land held the tradition of writing messages and tales of good luck on their wagon wheels for many years before Cyclasmus became a whole religion, and would exchange the wheels with other travelers in merchant towns. During the Faction Wars in the late Construction Era, the travelers, whom had become targets for struggling warbands, found refuge in the merchant city of Talrend. In a time without certainty, the travelers came together and accumulated their wheels in the center of town, reading off of them as a way to bring hope to the fearing and homeless merchants. Each of the belief fragments came together through the travelers in this time, and the Cyclasmus religion became whole.

The Original Text: The Merchant Wheels

The first indication of the Cyclasmus beliefs is present on the very early wheels of the Construction Era, which were often engraved with messages to provide good energies to those using the wheel for travel. It is theorized that as wheels traveled across the lands and were traded between travelers, fragments of the Cyclasmus belief system became seeded in traveler culture, but not combined. When many wheels were read aloud at once in Talrend by the fearing merchants, common themes of cyclical events and “all that is was before, and all that was before shall be again” became very clear. Most wheels used by travelers after the accumulation of Cyclasmus more strongly discuss this theme.

Main Area of Belief

Parts of Cyclasmus beliefs can be found across Avenyaw, extending into northern Resalgade. The traders of the countries travel between the cities on the main continents trading wheels alongside goods, allowing it to spread to a much wider following.

Relics of the Belief

Its origins as a traveler belief makes most of its relics part of the ways of trade: ancient coins and merchandise that passed hands to important persons, daggers and cloaks that protected noteworthy travelers, and most famously the engraved Wagon Wheels that acted as the belief’s Original Text, even before they all came together as Cyclasmus.

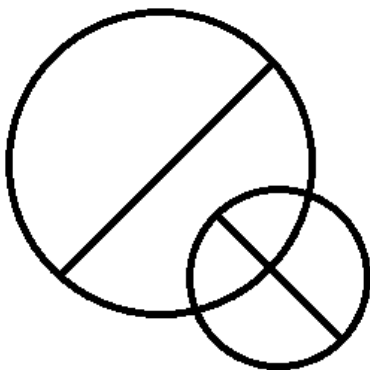
The Attraction for Belief

Trapped in a broken region and victims of constant crime, the merchants of Construction Era after the wars had little reason to believe in returning to their previous way of life. As merchants and travelers for generations, they and their families knew no other way, but the time almost stopped all merchant trade for nine years, the longest time of after-war danger in all of merchant history. The tales of their wheels focused on the cyclical nature of all things, which provided a great deal of hope for the broken merchants; believing in a cycle of things meant that they would one day return to their normal way of life, “the way things were.”

Variations of the Belief

Due to its origin as a fragmented religion, the Cyclasmus belief started off varied, and time made it even more so. As one of the oldest religions, there have been countless edits and variations to the stories and beliefs within it over the span of its existence. The nature of the Cycles, any deity power within, and the power of free will are the main parts that change with each variation. While the below list outlines full-fleshed versions of Cyclasmus, many travelers and merchants believe in all, some, or none of each version, and may also mix their beliefs with other religions.

b. Base Cyclasmus



The original image of Cyclasmus, showing an abstract version of two wagon wheels crossing.

The base religion, the first time all the fragmented beliefs of the Reslys region mixed together, was founded by a group of travelers brought together during the Faction Wars. The general idea

of cycles, most likely inspired by the travelers tending to walk the same path over their many years of trading, grew from just a general concept of things repeating to a solid framework for the workings of the universe.

The Way Of The Cycles

Everything in the Universe follows a set of events called the Cycles, a section of universal existence that repeats itself every time it ends. The main Cycle, the Cosmic Cycle, follows the time between the start and end of the universe, and is filled with smaller Cycles that repeat during a single rotation of the Cosmic Cycle.

The Different Cycles

The Cycles are organized into a tier system based on how often they reset in relation to the top cycle, the Cosmic Cycle. The lowest on the Tier, or the fastest resetting Cycle, is the Life Cycle, which follows the energies that follow each individual being. The next up from the Life Cycle is the Clan Cycle, which follows the path of small populations of Life Cycles. A section of Clan Cycles make up Nation Cycles, which are pieces of the World Cycles, which construct the Cosmic Cycle. Each tier of Cycle follows fewer numbers of living energy until it follows a single one, and also has more and more rotations as the population of the Cycles are reduced.

The Way Of Energy

Cyclasmus does not focus much on the way of energy itself, instead focusing on the nature of time and the behavior of populations of sentient beings, but it does have explanations for the behavior of energy and its influence on the world. Mortal interaction with the energy is considered manipulation of the Cycle, and is one of the few things Cycars consider wrong. Some Cycars choose to observe the energy in an attempt to gain better understanding of the way of the Cycles, but most choose to ignore it completely.

Energy as Intervention

While Cycars reject using energy, and find it morally wrong, the prevention of another using energy for their own gains is seen as an acceptable use of the power. Some Cycars choose to

become Interventionists, using their energy to cancel out the energy use of others. Using energy in this way is a morally gray area in Cyclasmus belief, but is not shameful, and may sometimes be seen as heroic.

The Way Of Choice

Due to the core concept of Cycles, the concept of Free Will is accepted to be false by the Cycars. Each thing will, with or without intention, act in the way of the Cycle, having no real control over the majority of their choices. Out of every belief, this is the one most Cycars struggle with before their acceptance, or rejection, of the Cyclasmus religion.

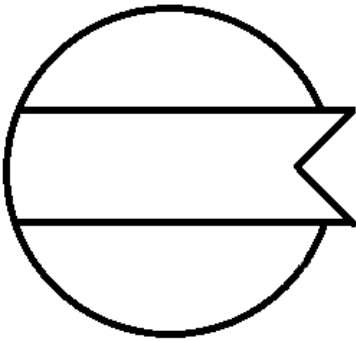
The Illusion of Choice

According to the Cyclasmus belief system, choices, like Cycles, are ordered on a tier system, organized by the Cosmic Influence of the choice. For example, choosing to eat eggs or berries for breakfast has little Cosmic Influence, while choosing whether or not a nation should go to war would have a higher Cosmic Influence. The Cosmic Influence of a choice has no set formula, but a rough pattern focuses mainly on the degree of future influence the choice has on which tiers of Cycle. The more Cosmic Influence a choice has, the less true choice the choice-maker has in making the choice, since all Cycles are destined to continue the same way as previously run.

Forfeit of All Free Will

The realization of non-freedom, in some Cycars, is too much to bear. The act of making choices without having any true control leads some people to desire freedom from the illusion. Through the act of Cyxis, the Cycar has the ability to abandon any future ability to act in the form of free will, instead becoming an empty slate under complete control of the Cycles. The ritual itself is very simple, and some traveler wheels have the instructions engraved on them, despite the illegality of owning such items. It is not unheard of for gathered travelers to all end up going through the Cyxis while under the influence of hallucinogens offered to the others by the owner of the Cyxis wheel. The most common drug choice for mass Cyxis is lysergic acid diethylamide, due to the spiral patterns the drug produces in its users.

c. Variation A: Corrumus (Corrupted Cyclasmus)



The image of Corrumus, portraying a Cycle that has been broken by a foreign entity.

The largest variation of Cyclasmus before the invention of Cycarism, Corrupted Cyclasmus, often shortened to Corrumus, bring deities and a sense of self-freedom to the Cycle belief. While the nature of a Cycle would mean that every one is the same, some sects of Cycars became unsettled with the idea that the world continued forever with no change whatsoever. These persons began the idea that small edits made by the Disruptor God Cyox over many Cycles have changed the Cosmic Cycle to become Corrupted. The Overseer God Cysama fights against Cyox in order to return the Cycle to its original and pure state, the True Cycle.

Cysama the Overseer and Cyox the Disruptor

The Cycles are monitored by two equal beings, Cysama and Cyox. The Cycles naturally control themselves due to the circular nature of all things, but Cyox seeks to change the Cycles, which, if he succeeded, would change all subsequent Cycles into his own ideal of existence. His small edits to the Cycles have changed the current nature of the Cycles, creating the Cycles that all things currently exist in: the Corrupted Cycles. Cysama acts as the guardian of the True Cycles, the Cycles unchanged by Cyox, and fights against him in every Cycle in order to slowly change the Corrupted Cycles into the True Cycles.

The Different Cycles

In addition to the Tier system, there are also two categories of the cycles: True and Corrupted Cycles. True Cycles are the fully natural way of things and controlled by Cysama, and Corrupted

Cycles are True Cycles that have been changed by Cyox to alter the way the Cycle behaves.

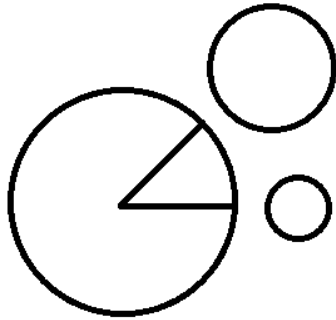
Energy as a Byproduct

Energy, rather than being its own element, is an extension of Cysama and Cyox on the physical world, and is considered a byproduct of their interactions with the Cycle. Through its power, the two are able to manipulate the way of the Cycles, but doing so requires the physical world to exist alongside it. Because of this, the physical world has become dependent on the existence of energy in order to continue being assisted by Cysama on the way to the True Cycle. In the True Cycle, energy no longer exists in a way accessible by mortals.

Morality and Non-Freedom

The Cycar do not have any system of morality, due to the Cycle being in control of all actions. Any action, regardless of whether others believe it to be good or bad, are seen as pre-destined and out of the actor's control. Rather than following a societal construct of good and bad, Cycar focus on the actions of the individual to determine if they are following Cysama's True Cycle path or Cyox's Corrupted Cycle path. If the friends of an individual notice a change in the individual's acts compared to past acts, they may be determined as being victims of Cyox, the closest the Cyclasmus religion gets to being "bad." Persons of Cyox are viewed as victims to be pitied, rather than criminals to be punished. Very few things are considered to be fully wrong by Cyclasmus standards, and all of them focus on mortal attempts to alter the Cycle.

d. Variation B: Fromus (Free Cyclasmus)



The image of Fromus, portraying a Cycle that points to two different Cycles.

A main topic that is not addressed in Base Cyclasmus is the idea of morality: since everything is the same for every Cycle, and one has no control over what Cycle they follow, why not commit cruelty on others? During a time of rampant crime after the Fraction Wars, a system of morals and reasons for needing them emerged from the worst-off areas, slowly spreading through the traveler routes on a set of wheels with golden spokes, later called the Glory Wheels. The new system still followed the idea of the Cycle, but gave believers freedom in the form of possible escape.

Morals and Cyclical Choice

The concept of Cyclical Choice is based around Cosmic Influence, and gives it meaning outside of the current cycle. Instead of Cosmic Influence, shortened to Coence, only ranking the free will of an action, it determines whether that action is “good” or “bad” for future Cycles. At the end of a person’s Life Cycle, all of their Coence is judged against itself, determining that person’s net worth in good-ness or bad-ness. The person’s Coence value determines which Cycle they enter in their next lifetime; a person can be born as a king or a peasant, or anything in between, depending on their Coence. The influence on Coence on a person is called Cyclical Choice, since events still follow a cycle, but acting within the laws of morals allow persons to choose the Cycle they live within.

The Morality System

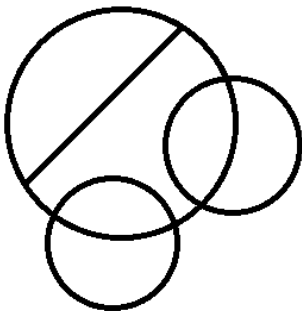
The Glory Wheels put forth a set of morals for gaining the best Coence possible, allowing people

to enter their next life better off than the lives before. Told through short fables about persons from past Cycles with lessons as the ending, the morals set forth by Fromus, called the List of Lessons, focus mostly on the lives led by travelling merchants. Following these rules brings good Coence, while breaking them brings bad Coence. In this system, there are no actions that are just bad or just good; the list tells things that are done for good or are acted against for bad.

The Glory Wheels

The ways of Fromus spread to other Cycars through a set of wheels on a veteran merchant, Francias Gorrigan. According to the story, the wheels are a relic from past cycles, and, unlike all other things, do not reset at the start of a new cycle: they remain a constant in the world and cannot be destroyed. Gorrigan travelled across the deserts and back, never replacing them once, and they never wore away. Unlike most wheels, he never traded them to others, instead allowing others to make copies of their words to place on bare wheels, marking the copies with golden paint. The original wheels remained in his family line for generations, until his descendant Ronald Gorrigan, a man without children, buried them in the desert to protect them from those who would abuse their indestructible quality.

e. Variation B-A: Mustraus (Moralistic Cyclasmus)



The image of Mustraus, portraying the more equal and connected nature of Cycles.

As the moral system from Fromus became popular in the Eastern trade routes, the non-roaming Cycars of the coastal merchant town Koas realized that their constantly changing populace was the perfect way to see how the public at large responded to concepts of morality, since they had a

new group of potential test subjects every few weeks. They decided to start the Mustra Test, named after the town's sheriff, Daniel Mustra. The discoveries made during the Mustra Test led the Cycars of Koas to rewrite the morals of Fromus in a way that, to him, made much more sense in the way of Cycles and properly respecting your fellow Cycar, where serve as the basis for Mustraus.

What They Witnessed

The Mustra Test consisted of the local Cycars setting up scenarios of moral dilemma, testing the travelers and finding how their belief in Cyclasmus affected their decisions. In general, they noticed that most of the travelers were rather self-centered, both with their possessions and their actions, and looked down on those less fortunate or victimized for being part of a "lesser" Cycle than themselves.

A Lack of Response

The first trait the local Cycars noticed with their visitors was their failure to become actively involved in stopping wrongdoing. The travelers, most of whom believed in some form of Cyclasmus, reasoned that whatever they witnessed was a part of a Cycle, and their intervention was unneeded or, for believers in Corrumus, actively going against the will of Cysama.

A Failure of Generosity

The local Cycars would occasionally send out their elderly members during times of eating to request a piece of food from the parked wagons. More times than not, the elderly were denied even a single roll by the travelers, who stated that if they were having difficulties, it was up to them in their own Cycle to overcome it. There was simply no motivation to be generous, since giving would produce good coence, but keeping possessions to oneself had no consequence.

A Dislike of Victims

To the local Cycar's surprise, the travelers not only failed to help those less fortunate than themselves, but even looked down on them, treating those who lived through hardships as their lesser. The belief in coence and Cyclical Choice meant that, to the believers, those in such positions were bad people in the life before, so they deserved no sympathy.

What They Changed

Mustra saw the flaws that belief in Cyclasmus caused in the morals of others, and as a moral man, he knew the ways of the universe couldn't be so blind to the ways of good and bad. By observing the travelers and their moral systems, he added some additional moral clarifications and guidelines by taking as many Fromus-preaching Wheels as he could and putting his additions on them. While they never became as known as the original morals, it did make a difference in Koas.

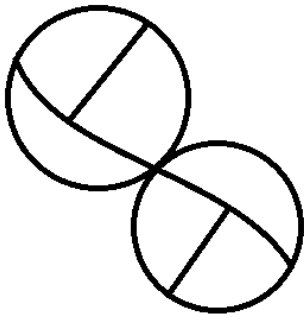
Negative coence for Inaction

Mustraus rewrote the way that coence worked in the individual, so that a lack of action did not give no coence; failing to respond to a person in immediate need would produce negative coence, the same amount that the person doing wrong in the witnessed scenario was producing with his actions. Likewise, failure to help a person in lifetime need, such as poverty, would give negative coence proportional to the positive coence that would have been achieved by assisting the individual.

A Change in Cyclical Choice

The way of Cyclical Choice was also edited to try and prevent belief in "lesser" Cycles and persons within them. All people, good or bad, would go through both types of Cycles, of greatness and despair, but the way of Cyclical Choice would choose how many times a person would experience both types of Cycle. This way, someone in a bad personal situation would be experiencing a bad Cycle, but it would not be entirely their past Cycle's fault.

f. Variation B-B: Elymus (Cycle-Typed Cyclasmus)



The image of Elymus, showing abstract forms of Hajael and Hexyn Cycles.

The logical extension of Fromus and slightly visited by Mustraus, Elymus organizes all Cycles that happen in the universe into two types: Hajael, the Good Cycles, and Hexyn, the Bad Cycles. A person's coence determines which Life Cycle they will experience, and remaining in the same type of Life Cycle for extended periods causes the Cycles above that to change. For example, a region filled with people in Hajael Life Cycles will experience a Hajael Nation Cycle in that area, and an abundance of Hajael Nation Cycles across the world will cause a Hajael World Cycle. The same is true of Hexyn Cycles, except for bad persons instead of good.

Hajael - The Good Cycles

By gathering good coence, a person can enter Hajael, the Good Cycles. These Cycles are filled with Fortune for those within, such as the finding of love, great discoveries, and general happiness within one's life and homeland. In addition, a person who lives multiple Hajael Cycles has a chance to carry their wisdoms into their next Life Cycle, until they are Enlightened in every Cycle they live in.

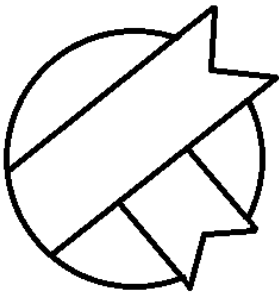
Hexyn - The Bad Cycles

Bad coence leads to a person entering Hexyn, the Bad Cycles. These Cycles bring the persons into misfortunes and tragedy, both for themselves and their homeland. Living multiple Hexyn Cycles corrodes a person's sense of Self, until they finally are stuck living as shadows of their true Self.

Switching Cycle Types

The total gathered coence by a person determines their Cycle, so someone on the border of the Cycles can change which Type of Cycle they enter with each Cycle they experience. A person deep in Hajael or Hexyn can fall to Hexyn or rise to Hajael in two ways: by changing their coence personally and drastically or by being in a Nation Cycle of a certain Type. A dramatic personal change in coence can be done by extreme Acts, such as altruism and homicide. A Nation Cycle of one Type will influence the Type of the Life Cycles within it, which can cause a Type change as well.

g. Variation A-A: Cyoxity (Cyox Worship)



The image of Cyoxity, with two Cycle breaks instead of one.

A small cult-like group, persons who follow Cyoxity, called Yoxers, believe in the ways of Cyox rather than Cysama. The will of Cysama is oppressive and limiting, taking away a person's free will in order to control all the Cycles of the world. Cyox fights against this oppression, preserving the free will of people and their ability to choose the Cycle they desire with their own actions. His Corrupted Cycles, called Chance Cycles in this case, create many different options for people to take, instead of being stuck in the same loop eternally.

The Natures of Cysama and Cyox

In Cyoxity, Cysama's goal to create the one True Cycle is thought to be a negative thing rather than a positive one. Cysama's True Cycle is a Cycle that repeats eternally without change, completely erasing the idea of free will. Cyox and his Change Cycles, on the other hand, may not be perfect, but they allow all living things to choose their own paths, changing the Cycles through their choices and the power of Cyox. These changes are forged by the power of free will,

which makes these Cycles more appealing than the eternal and unchanging trap of the True Cycle.

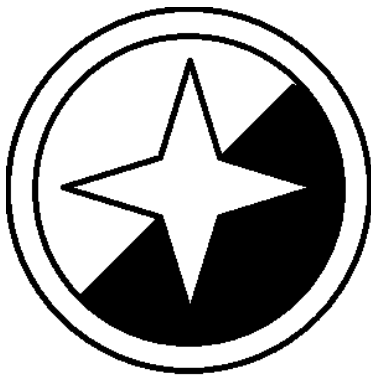
Energy as a Weapon

Energy is created by Cyox's changes, and Cyox allows Mortals to use this energy to further change the Cycles. Yoxers use energy as an offensive tool against those who fight against Cyox and, in their eyes, the freedom of choice. The more powerful an energy user is, the closer that person is to Cyox, and the more affect their choices have on altering the Cycles to come.

Surrender by Cyxis

Through the act of Cyxis, persons abandon any future ability to act with their own free will, instead becoming a puppet of Cyox and acting fully in his influence. Yoxers attempt to bring other persons into the will of Cyox by tricking them into going through the ritual themselves, usually by putting them under the influence of hallucinogens. The Cyxis ritual is simple even for non-sober persons, allowing Yoxers to get more people under Cyox's influence without their consent.

h. Variation A-B: Cycarism (Mixed Cyclasmus)



The image of Cycarism, showing the inner light and shadow of all Cycars.

The largest and most official of all the Cyclasmus variations, Cycarism is a complete religious concept, giving more context for the single person and the way of the Cycles. A mixing pot of all the Cyclasmus beliefs to come before it, this belief has the ideas of deities, morals, and the Cycle

types all under a single belief. First originating in Talrend during the annual Wheel Reading in the town's main square, happening every year after the birth of Cyclasmus, it brought almost every branch of Cyclasmus back together in a single unit. Additionally, it has the first official order of Cycars, the Ring Order, sorted by lay Cycars, Head Cycars, and the one Lead Cycar. Both lay Cycars and Cycars of the Ring Order come together to act out the rituals of Cycarism in Ring Houses, their place of worship.

Traditional Cycarism

The first type of Cycarism to arise, Traditional Cycarism takes the information from its ancestor beliefs at face value, changing very little about the separate beliefs while still combining them into a singular whole. Cysama the Overseer God is powered by good coence and resides on the Hajael Cycle types, acting as the source of good Cycles in the world. Cyox is the opposite; as the Disruptor God, he reigns in Hexyn and is powered by bad coence in the world. Cycars can send messages to Cysama and request additional good coence in Ring Houses, large circular buildings adorned with the Wheels that built up Cycarism.

Deities, Morals, and Cycle Types

In Traditional Cycarism, Cysama is still an Overseer of the Cycles, fighting against the edits of Cyox and trying to move the Corrupted Cycles into the one True Cycle. Cycars can affect the power of the two gods by gathering either good or bad coence, which is the energy of the gods themselves. Gathering coence gives the gods additional power, allowing them to have a greater effect on the Cycles. Cycars are rewarded for their gathering of coence by the gods by being put into Hajael and Hexyn Cycles, depending on which god has been affected by their actions.

The Ring Order

Most Cycars are travelers and unable to fully devote themselves to a region, but those who do can study the ways of the Cycles and the gods at the region's Ring House. Once the Cycar has devoted several years of life into fully grasping the nature of the Cycles that have been and the Cycles to come, he may preach to the visiting Cycars at the Ring House, explaining to them what is to be and how to best follow the way of Cysama in the current Cycle. This study and preaching brings the Cycar the title of Voice of Cysama, or High Cycar. High Cycars generate more coence

than regular Cycars, affecting the gods and Cycles of the area much more than other followers.

The Ring Houses and Origin Wheels

Places of worship are called the Ring Houses from their large rounded shape, both inside and out. Inside of the building, a large circular podium stands in the middle, with one of the Origin Wheels hung on the ceiling directly above it. Preachers stand upon the podium and look directly up at the Origin Wheel of their Ring House as they preach, with listeners sitting around it and also viewing the Wheel. As the High Cycar speaks, he slowly rotates to face all sides of the Ring House, with the sermon being complete when he finishes one cycle of turning. The Origin Wheel that is looked at is usually symbolic of the region the Ring House is located in; stories that reference a specific place will be found in that place's Houses, while certain morals are more likely to be found in some towns over others.

Reformed Cycarism

As Cycarism became more and more popular, a very popular High Cycar named Joren Cysan decided to do something no Cycar had done before: visit every Ring House and devote a year of study at each one, fully gathering the traditions and beliefs of each region of Cycarism and bringing them together in one mind, his own. He used the Talrend House's beliefs as the one to compare all others to, and found that the many variations seemed to have a pattern that was not well resembled in Talrend. He returned with his knowledge and began to preach anew, and his seemingly endless knowledge made him appear to be much greater than other Head Cycars. He became the Lead Cycar of the Ring, the first to exist and the years following his death brought beliefs of Cysan actually being Cysama reborn, bringing the real nature of the world that Cycars had come so close to grasping into light.

The True Ways of Cysama and Cyox

In Reformed Cycarism, Cysama is not just the Overseer God, but is the one singular Creator of the World and All Cycles. Cyox is a being born from Cysama's shadow, and is not truly a god in his own right, though he does possess a power far greater than mortals due to being outside of the Cycles. Jealous of Cysama and his perfect creation, Cyox cast his power through the shadows of the world, shifting the way of the Cycles from the True Cycle that Cysama had created.

Cysama fought back through light, but the two were too evenly balanced in the new world for Cysama to do anything but prevent further corruption. When people gather coence, they become a vessel of light or darkness, giving further places for Cysama and Cyox to affect the world and the Cycles.

The Lead Cycar's True Identity

The Lead Cycar, chosen from the select few Head Cycars that have traveled the world and studied in all Ring Houses, is actually transformed into Cysama himself for a single Life Cycle. By surrendering a single Life Cycle to Cysama, the Lead Cycar becomes the largest possible vessel of light, and can directly fight against Cyox from within the world. The Lead Cycar is surrounded by a chosen few Head Cycars, who act as both His guards and advisors, since Cysama is not actually mortal and requires assistance interacting with those who are. The Lead Cycar erases all shadows from His presence, making it impossible for Cyox to use his power on Him or His chosen Head Cycars.

Radical Cycarism

The concept of the Cycars themselves being a vessel for light and shadow, the power of Cysama and Cyox respectively, gave many Cycars a feeling of personal empowerment stronger than the concepts of Cyclical Choice or even Cycle Types did; being the direct source of energy for a duo of deities was pretty empowering in a belief where everyone was stuck in a series of Cycles with no real reason for it. The belief that Head Cycars have more influence on the world than others is present in all forms of Cycarism, but one preacher single handedly created the idea of Radical Cycarism through this part of the belief.

The Origins of Belief

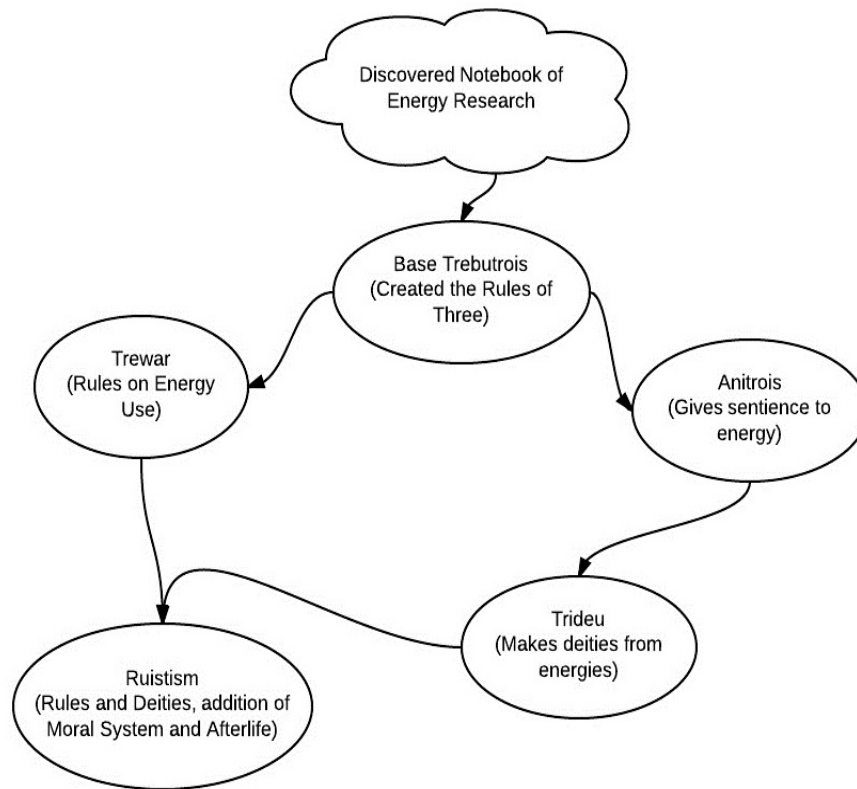
During a regular sermon of Reformed Cycarism in Fejord, preacher and Head Cycar Maxwell Cambrian collapsed mid-sentence when speaking about the Lead Cycar being above all Head Cycars. The lay Cycars surrounded the preacher, unsure of what to do. Reportedly, he suddenly opened his eyes, stared up at the Wheel of the House, and said “The Wheels tell us of Cycles Past, Present, and Future, but it is our Loyalties that have freed us of the Ring.” Upon regaining consciousness, Cambrian stood back up, with no memory of his words, and spoke of a strange

dream to the lay Cycars: he felt the light of Cysama burn all around his body, and when it stopped, he knew he had been freed from the Cycles, and would enter the world outside of the Cycles, the world of Cysama and Cyox, upon his death. Wheels with his Words and his dream spread quickly through the region, with believers trying to make heads or tails of what the visions meant. A small gathering of local Head Cycars determined that loyal Head Cycars could be freed from the Cycles by Cysama, if he deemed them worthy, and Cambrian was the first to be judged as worthy.

Freedom through Cybol

According to Radical Cycarism, all Cycars who enter the Ring fully dedicate and reveal themselves to Cysama and enter a state of judgment. If judged positively, Cysama can use his power to burn the Cycle out of their energy, freeing them upon death to Cybol, the world in which Cysama and his shadow Cyox reside. In this world, all things change without returning to the way it once was; it is a world of constant change without repetition. The current World Cycle, where all mortals reside, exists in a single fruit on Cysama's prized tree, with each other fruit holding another World Cycle in it. Once all things reach the True Cycle, the tree will create a single perfect fruit holding the True Cycle within it, and this fruit will be immune to Cyox's shadows.

2. Trebutois



a. General Trebutois

Trebutois (Tray-boo-troy) is an ideology rather than a religion, though those who study its core concepts tend to forget the difference between the two. The ideology is used as a background framework for understanding the world of energy; while not everything believed under Trebutois is a proven fact, it is heavily influenced by the observations on nature and energy behaviors. It is the most recently created of the world's ideologies, and therefore has very limited variations.

The Founder: The Mysterious Notebook

Trebutois began as a single sentence jotted in the margin of a notebook outlining the study of energy users: *I have before noted the occurrence of things grouping into three of their own*

accord, but I never imagined it to be so pervasive. The owner of the notebook is unknown, as it was found by a group of students in the middle of an old study-site in Romas, Bothi.

The Original Text: The Scholarly Reviews on the Mysterious Notebook

The mysterious notebook and strange observation led answer-seeking scholars, most of whom followed the word of the Korui belief system, to look further into the concept of three, and a number of works were written on how things seemed to always fall into trios of their own kind. The study soon got its own name, Trebuology, and the idea that everything had a natural order of three attracted many curious students. As more works were written on the topics, students and scholars alike took their findings to heart, creating the base of Trebutrois.

Main Area of Belief

Most of Trebutrois's followers hail from the eastern side of Bothi, where the original Mysterious Notebook was found. The Twin Cities Romas and Gerjel are places of the highest respect for scholars, which made an ideology focused on discovery rather than faith the perfect choice for the area.

Relics of the Belief

By its original nature as an ideology rather than a religion, there are very few relics that are associated with Trebutrois. The original Notebook and Reviews of such are the most well-known, being the origin of the belief itself. The original Scholars also had metal constructs made of the Trebutrois symbol from gold, silver, and alabaster to wear as pendants, showing their grand understanding of Three through their studies. The silver Symbol is lost to time (though many subjects are suspected of being either the whole Symbol or created from its material), but the gold and alabaster Symbols are held in two of the greatest Institutions as a sign of extreme higher learning.

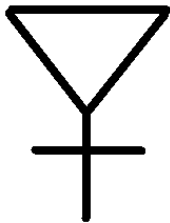
The Attraction for Belief

The extreme organization of Trebutrois made it a very attractive thing for men of study who deeply desired the universe to have rhyme and reason that mortal life could comprehend.

Evolution of the Belief

When the study was applied to more abstract concepts, such as religion, learners of Trebuology came to the conclusion that, since the pattern of threes appeared to prove true for things of the observable world, it must also apply to the unobservable. When a pattern of threes appeared in religious works created long before the invention of Trebuology, many people took it as a sign that religious belief had a basis in fact. While the base Trebutrois belief has no religious aspects, and is seen instead as a list of observations, its few variants are more religiously focused.

b. Base Trebutrois



The main symbol of the ideology, showing a triangle attached to a cross with three end points.

In the Trebutrois belief system, all things follow a pattern of three. The ideal is to find balance in the three, but sentient flaw creates Affinity and Aversion to certain traits in the trinities, generating imbalance in the form of preference and dislike, respectively. An individual's natural Affinities and Aversions choose what other beings the individual will co-operate with; a shared Affinity or a shared Aversion will generate close bonds, while having an Aversion to another's Affinity will create strong feelings of dislike and discomfort. Balancing Affinities and Aversions not only create personal balance, but also balance with other beings; an absence of imbalance allows the individual to always start on the same neutral ground with every being (with regards to preferences caused by trinities). While the base Trebutrois belief system does have a pantheon of deities or records of religious texts, a majority of followers either do not believe in sentient higher powers or follow the religious texts of a different belief system. A subset of Trebutrois, known as Deistic Trebutrois, adds the idea of deities to the belief system.

Three Components of Sentient Nature (The Sentience Trinity)

Sentient life following the ideology believe in three components to living things: the Blood, Bone, and Brain. Conquering the natural imbalance caused by Affinity and Aversion creates a whole being that is at peace with itself, which is viewed as a type of enlightenment; it allows the balanced individual to experience the world through an unbiased lens.

The Blood

The Blood of life is embodied by Ink, a staining semi-permanent liquid. Blood is concerned with the Past, focusing on histories and tradition. The Ink resembles the recording and recollection of history that may otherwise be forgotten. Family history is not only relevant to Blood, but holds high value, and can carry an individual to glory with good bloodlines or weigh them down with the sins of a dirty family tree. Blood allows sentience to look back on and learn from the past, but can lead to an inability to let go of past events and misfortunes. Those with an Affinity for Blood often become scholars and writers from their love of the act of recording through the written word, though may be prone to holding lifetime grudges and regrets. Aversion to Blood often manifests through being unable to learn from past events and having unfounded feelings of dislike for blood relatives.

The Bone

The Bone of life is embodied by Alabaster, a strong white stone. Bone is a member of the Present, unconcerned with the passing of time and existing purely in the moment. The Alabaster is an example of a material unfazed by the Past or Future, focused on only the moment it exists in. The natural world is a focus for Bone, since the earth and non-sentient life do not find value in time, and are viewed as timeless entities. The physical body also falls under Bone, since it is a product of timeless nature. Bone lets sentience find value in every moment, unhindered by the past or future, but can result in an inability to judge consequences or learn from past mistakes. An Affinity for Bone leads to a desire to be at one with nature, and often causes the individual to have a physical body stronger or healthier than other sentience. Aversion to Bone causes problems with the physical body, formed by either hate for its form or frailty and sickness, and in some cases causes a profound dislike for the uncontrolled natural world.

The Brain

The Brain of life is embodied by Star, a celestial ball of plasma. Brain is focused on the Future, since it allows sentience to look forward and imagine a time that has not yet occurred. The Star shows this concept through the science of light: since stars are so far from the world, the time it takes for sentience to view them means that the stars are always existing in a future that the world has not yet seen. With Brain, sentience can not only imagine the future, but also the nonexistent, creating scenarios and situations of all possible outcomes, even if some may not be able to exist at all. The Brain finds its place under the night sky; the stars resemble the countless ideas that the Brain is capable of creating. Brain gives sentience the ability to dream and judge the consequences of present actions, but can create a disconnect from reality. Brain Affinity creates artists and oracles from their ease of creating and looking forward. An Aversion to Brain stifles creativity, and leads to trouble with the judgment of possible future outcomes.

Three Components of Natural Energy (The Elemental Trinity)

The energy which exists through the world falls into three categories, which each hold three elements with similar properties but varied specifics. A being which uses an element from a trinity would have little issue learning to use another element from the same trinity due to Affinity, but would face challenges if attempting to learn from outside their trinity, especially if their traits caused natural Aversion.

The Natural Trinity: Water, Earth, and Air

The elements in this trio represent the needed materials for the majority of life: a source of water, a place to grow, and air to breathe. Water is focused on the flow of both life and energy, Earth focuses more on the idea of life than energy, and Air is less attached to life than energy. Despite the different focuses, each element contributes to life, and all have a connection with the natural world. Beings who use the Natural Trinity will face Aversion with the Rate Trinity if they use their energy in a balanced way, and will feel Aversion for the Action Trinity if their use of energy is independent of the actions of others.

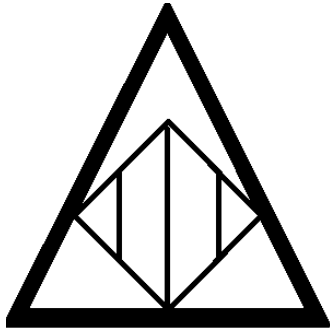
The Rate Trinity: Lightning, Fire, and Light

This trio of elements focuses on the manifestations of the fourth state of matter, plasma, as different forms of energy, which are determined by the way the energy is released. Lightning is focused on quick bursts of high volumes of energy, Fire is often a more constant, though varied, release of energy, and Light is identified by a slower but continuous release of energy. The different forms of energy release create the different elements of the trinity, though they all share the ability to create light and generate heat. Those who focus on the Rate Trinity will have Aversion to the Natural Trinity if they are apathetic to the effect of energy on life and balance, and will sense Aversion to the Action Trinity if they use their energy proactively rather than reactively.

The Action Trinity: Ice, Aether, and Shadow

The elements of this trio are generated by the intentions of the being which harnesses them. Ice is a defensive element that is used to shield and protect, Aether is the creation of an energy vacuum which takes away the ability for elements to be harnessed, and Shadow is an offensive element that seeks to prevent a threat's ability to gather energy of its own by any means. Beings who harness the Action Trinity will have Aversion to the Natural Trinity if they use energy as a reaction only to actions done targeting the individual being, and will feel Aversion to the Rate Trinity if they cannot imagine calling upon energy without an immediate cause.

c. Variation A: Trewar (Activistic Trebutrois)



The image of Trewar, showing a helmet-like shape of threes.

The first variation of Trebutrois brings in the concept of the Energy Trinity, which outlines the way that persons of battle should use energy to improve their combat abilities. By having the Mage, Mount, and Staff; a person, animal, and object respectively, using the power of energy as a single unit, those following the laws of Activistic Trebutrois believe that their power becomes near unstoppable. The Activistic Trebutrois laws involve a much more literal reading of the Trinity concepts, taking everything the base ideology outlines as undeniable natural fact.

It began in the coastal East region of Sain, where scholars of Min and soldiers of Mas were always at odds with one another. The Grand Ruler Athan recognized the split and asked his minister, Celio Vinne, for guidance on how to bring the two halves of his region, body and mind, into a single unit. Vinne traveled outside of the nation's bounds in hope of finding a solution, and came across the idea of Trebutrois. Bringing it back to the Grand Ruler, he theorized that the belief system would appeal to the scholars through its organization of the world, and would appeal to the soldiers through its promise of harnessing the power of energy. The system became introduced to the nation, enforced by the Grand Ruler. Soldier-farmers of the nation discovered that the knowledge of energy's natural trio-ism improved their power even greater than usual when near their farm animals, and over the years of soldiers fighting alongside their horses and animal companions, their blades and companions became their greatest weapons for using the energy. The scholars, now partners with their soldier neighbors, studied the phenomenon and worked out the concept of the Energy Trinity. During this time of research, an additional trinity, the Ideal Trinity, emerged, defining the ideal User of Energy.

Three Components of Mystical Energy (The Energy Trinity)

In order to harness the full power of the natural energies of the world, there must be three present components: the User, the Storage, and the Channel. While energy can be harnessed and used without all three present, the behavior and power of the energy will be greatly affected. By having all three components, the captured energy can be used to its maximum potential.

The User

The User of the energy is commonly referred to as the Mage, and is a sentient-born being with a high sensitivity to the world of energy. The User is the starting place for the Energy Trinity, since the creation of the Storage and the Channel depends on the intervention of a User. If a User decides to enter the Trinity, the individual finds a suitable creature and item to become the Storage and Channel, respectively, and often practice for many days to ensure they can use enough energy alone to start the creation of a Trinity. They can naturally store small amounts of energy without the aid of the Storage, but the amount collected is not enough to use any sort of powerful spells. They are also capable of using the energy, though the energy is much harder to control without the use of a Channel.

The Storage

The Storage of the energy usually is called the Mount, and is a creature that is granted sentience and larger-than-average size through a User's energy. The Storage can originally be any species, with no regard to size or intelligence, but must be less than a third through its life cycle when it is introduced to the User's energy. The User's energy gives the Storage sentient awareness, and it quickly grows to a size which allows the User to ride it as a means of transport. The Storage can easily collect huge amounts of energy without exertion, but cannot release this energy in the absence of a User without great effort, and often fails to control it if separated from a Channel when it is released.

The Channel

The Channel of the energy is often referred to as the Staff, and is a non-living object, usually a weapon of sorts, which is adjusted to work using energy by the User. The Channel must be at

least half of the User's height, or it would not be able to successfully control the amount of energy being released at any given time. Channels are often crafted specifically for a User to ensure that it is made to the User's exact needs, but this is more of a traditional practice than a practical one; the energy used to change an item into a Channel naturally adjusts it to match the User. The Channel can control energy without hesitation, but it cannot store any energy, making it dependent on ambient surrounding energy in the Storage's absence, and it cannot release the energy at will without a User, making the power of the spells it channels alone extremely chaotic.

Three Components of the User (The Ideal Trinity)

In addition to ways to use energy, Trewar also added the three ideal traits any User should have. Called the Ideal Trinity, the three traits, called pillars, are said to encompass the best parts of all people, allowing anyone who works at having all parts of the Trinity to become a hero among men. An absence of these pillars, or a swelling of one of these pillars, knocks the Self out of balance, and warps the User's energy into a corrupted force, much like a broken or warped pillar fails at supporting a building.

Honor

The pillar of Honor encompasses the Self's motivation for recognition and respect, both to give and receive. With Honor, a User wins the hearts of others through respect and manners, and follows the unseen rules regarding interactions with those of both higher and lower recognition than himself. A User of balanced Honor extends the rules of Honor not only to his peers, but also his enemies; all but the lowest of evils are worthy of the Honor they have earned. Too little Honor leads the User on a path of disrespect and obscurity, while too much creates an overwhelming sense of undeserved self-worth, and may lead to manipulative tendencies.

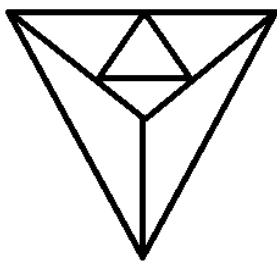
Loyalty

The pillar of Loyalty gives the User a place and motive not only for his actions, but for his Self. Loyalty places the User in a hierarchy of power in his area of Loyalty, called his Place, and gives him reason to act if his Place requests it of him. A User with balanced Loyalty acts in the best interest of his Place, placing the good of the Place over his own good. Too little Loyalty creates rebels and terrorists, while too much Loyalty can turn a User into a slave of those above him and, in unfortunate cases, an unneeded martyr.

Ambition

The pillar of Ambition moves the Self to improve both himself and his Place, seeking out a better future for both. Having Ambition means that one is not afraid to not only accept change, but pursue it. The flexibility and improvement given through Ambition breeds bravery, which allows the User to surpass where he is born and venture into the unknown, especially against any sort of adversary. Too little Ambition creates cowardice and fear of change, while too much makes a User abandon his Loyalties and Honors in search of power.

d. Variation B: Anitrois (Theistic Trebutrois)



The image of Anitrois, showing an abstracted form of a Whisp.

The original study of three made no mention of paranormal beings or anything akin to a God; it was meant only to find patterns in the behaviors of energy. However, the desire for something greater than oneself and the surrounding energies led to the personification of the Elemental Trinities, especially in small villages surrounding the Twin Cities of Bothi that learned of the ideology from wandering scholars. Known as Whisps, the sentient energies are generally

apathetic to mortal life, and instead focus on keeping the balance of Three in the world. When provoked or moved by mortals, however, they can be used for good and harm by those who know the way.

Whisps of the Natural Trinity (Water, Earth, and Air)

In this Trinity, the Whisps take on very physical forms, appearing as the spirits of nature and the natural world. In their undisguised form, the Water, Earth, and Air Whisps appear to be very small creatures with resemblance to turtles, rabbits, and birds, respectively. While disguised, they can appear as any living thing or their own element, but cannot take the form of specific persons or animals; their morphed forms are “generic” examples of the species they are appearing as, which often leads to disturbing appearances when disguised as sentient beings. They behave as a team, wandering in clans and working together to keep the balance of their natural realm intact. These Whisps act freely on the natural world and life therein, making crops grow, rivers flow, winds blow, and other natural acts.

Whisps of the Rate Trinity (Lightning, Fire, and Light)

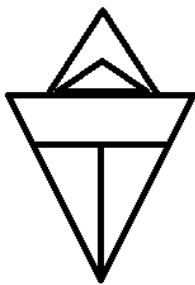
This Trinity of Whisps take on visible but non-solid forms, appearing as sources of heat and power. They move rapidly, usually too fast for the untrained eye to see, and generate the heat and light that counteracts the cold and darkness of the Action Trinity Whisps. Undisguised, they are long, glowing, snakelike hazes, almost dragon-like in appearance, that heat the area within their coils, sometimes causing sparks when their bodies strike themselves. When they slow, their bodies become brighter and hotter, and if they do not move enough, their energy explodes within them and sends them shooting faster than ever and bright enough for anything to see, creating lightning. When these Whisps interact with mortal life, they tend to be playful in a very mischievous manner.

Whisps of the Action Trinity (Ice, Aether, and Shadow)

The Whisps of this Trinity are invisible to the natural eye in their undisguised form, bringing the cold and darkness that the Whisps of the Rate Trinity balance out. They are slow and largely immobile, though if they must move they condense themselves and enter a drifting form, though they have no control over where they drift. If they choose to become visible, they appear as

large plant-like beings with long, moving roots spreading all through what they determine is their territory. The top of the plant appears as a semi-transparent sphere coated in ice and filled with shadow, often called the Koraki-Numu, or Dark Heart. Whisps of this Trinity are very territorial, often attacking other Whisps that wander into their area, including the drifting versions of Action Trinity Whisps. Their interaction with mortals is negative, but usually not malicious; the effects of their presence are not intentional, but harmful to mortal life.

e. Variation B-A: Trideu (Deistic Trebutrois)



The image of Trideu, showing an abstract form of one of the Guardian Trio. Other images exist portraying other Trios, but the Guardian Trio is the most worshipped and, therefore, the main religious icon.

The natural result of Theistic Trebutrois, the personified elements from the Elemental Trinity slowly became more personal and powerful, especially on Isla Mas, until they became separate from the Whisps they emerged from. Now deities, the new set of gods known as the Pantheon, have little resemblance to their origin stories.

The Deity Pantheon

The deities of Deistic Trebutrois each belong to a trinity, which encompass a single general characteristic shared among the members of the trio. The deities are said to live in a space between the stars, in a world made of alabaster with rivers of ink and trees made of stars. Deities are not believed to be an active force in the world, but prayer has the power to contact the deities and, in some cases, bring them to the world for assistance. The powers of the deities are limited to the traits of the trio in which that deity belongs. While there are countless deities and trios, the

most well-known of them is called the Trisect, which is a trinity of trios that are the strongest deistic forces. It is believed that deism is, with the exception of the Trisect, a trait that one earns, rather than being born into godly powers.

The Creator's Trio: Author, Alter, Aeon

The deities in this trio are the creators of all the world, and it is their continued existence which allows the universe to continue. In the beginning, Author generated a world consisting of only the base elements, but the universe was chaos. Alter controlled the elements and used them to generate specific forms, such as using the Earth element to create mountains. Aeon brought forth the concept of time, which allowed the creations to change of their own accord, given they were left alone for a while. Author is the generator of the elements, Alter is the craftsman who formed order from the elements, and Aeon is the watchman who allowed the forms of the elements to change without Author or Alter. It is said that as long as each of these beings exist, the world cannot truly come to an end.

The Punishment Trio: Impale, Ignite, Invade

While the deities as a whole do not have a specific system of morals, the deities of this trio seek to punish the sins of others, with “sins” being defined as whatever causes the victim personal turmoil. Impale takes the form of a huge bull, and punishes through injury to the physical body. Ignite shows itself as a flaming fox, and torments through the emotional, creating the illusion that the heart itself is burning with sin. Invade appears as a snake made of dark fog, and inflicts pain through the mind, entering the victim's mind and holding them captive to the visions of their wrongdoings. They are in constant conflict with the Guardian Trio, who do not believe that mortal life can be held accountable for any error of their ways.

The Guardian Trio: Protect, Preserve, Prevent

The deities of this trio view all mortal life, no matter how old or knowledgeable, as weak children, and seek to protect them from the wrongdoings of each other and themselves. Each one takes the form of a bipedal creature hidden beneath a long robe and holding a curved staff. Protect has a creature made from stone on its staff, and specializes in protective spells such as shields. Preserve has a creature of water on its staff, and uses healing spells. Prevent holds a

creature of fire on its staff, and uses threatening spells to stop conflicts before they begin. They are constantly struggling against the Punishment Trio, who believe that mortal life not only is sentient enough to understand its wrongdoings, but deserves to be punished for their sins.

Three Components of the Deistic Intervention (The Watchful Trinity)

Belief in the Deity Pantheon alone does little more than give believers a basis for how the world works. Without a way to have the Deity interact with mortals, they are just stories, not true Deities. The Watchful Trinity goes over the rules of Deistic Intervention, or how and why a Deity would choose to interact with the world of mortals.

Mortal Calls Out To Deity

The most common reason for Deities to come to the mortal realm, this part of the Watchful Trinity states that the Deities can hear the wishes of mortal persons, and choose to respond to them. It does not matter what words are said, but their feelings and intentions; it is said that Deities speak with heart, not tongue. If enough people call out or few call out strongly, a Deity is sure to hear, and may choose to intervene. This usually brings about the Guardian Trio.

Mortal Acts Against Deity

On occasion, and especially with the Punishment Trio, acts of mortals go against what the Deities see as “right” behavior. What will and will not offend a Deity varies on the individual, though most are apathetic to the ways of mortals as long as they do not directly spite or attack the Deities. Speaking ill of Deities, wishing others harm through them, and seeking a way to enter their world are all seen as Acts against Deities. The only Deities with actual morals are the Punishment Trio, who are most often the ones who enter the mortal realm for this reason.

Mortal Captures Deistic Attention

There are times where mortals do not call out to or offend the Deities, but their actions still bring Deities to the mortal world. Such actions are usually ones of altruism, a rare trait in the mortal realm, or ones that change the ways of the world. The Creator’s Trio comes down the most for this reason, giving visions of acknowledgement to the greatest of the great. On rare occasions, they may even give power to or prevent the death of such persons.

f. Variation A-B-A: Ruistism (Moralistic Trebutrois)



The image of Ruistism, showing a badge-like shape of triangular structures.

A combination of Trideu and Trewar, the concepts of being watched by deities and rules existing for the use of energy created the concepts of morality and the afterlife. The Grand Word of Three, written by Scholar John Ruist of Gerjel, outlines the laws of the universe and how mortal beings must behave in order to successfully be at peace within it. It is the final variation of Trebutrois, and viewed as an official religious belief rather than an ideology.

The Grand Word of Three

The closest any Trebutrois sect gets to a Holy Writing, the Grand Word is the result of Ruist's twenty-year study on the power of all things being in three. According to his research, the pattern of three is not just worldly organization, but worldly necessity. He explains his new Trinity which construct the supporting power of the universe, and what each member of the Trinity needs to do in order to not only allow the world to exist, but also to flourish. He also brings the idea of an Afterlife to the world of three in the form of the Spirit Trinity.

Section One: The Construction of the World and its Members

The Ruist world creation story closely follows the stories of Trideu, except with one change: Deities, Whisps, and Mortals all came into being at the same time in Aevran, the void where the world began. The Section tells the story of the first nine things in existence: the three Deities Author, Alter, and Aeon; the three Whisps Froul of Water, Spog of Lightning, and Shane of Shadow; and the three Lives Erkuxi the Eel, Murako the Hawk, and Adavee the Man. It goes from them existing as equals to how the Deities gained their divine power, how Whisps became one with energy, and how Lives lost their immortality and became Mortals.

Section Two: The Requirements of the Members of the World

This Section goes through the first description of Morals in any Trebutrois variation. All lives in the universe fall into the Awareness Trinity, made up of Deities, Whisps, and Mortals. Each of these sections of the Trinity has its own set of Morals that it must follow, which preserves the world prevents the Chaos of Aevran from returning. These Morals are listed below in the Three Components of Morality.

Section Three: The Need of the Members of the World to Follow the Requirements of the Members of the World

The previous Section went over the Morals required of each group of beings, but this Section goes into why it's so important that beings follow the set rules. In a general review, Section Three states that the Way of Three works to support the World in total balance with the fewest possible corruptions; two and four would cause ties of power, and five would be too wide to be safe for such a wide thing. Therefore, the Trinities, each point with a weakness and strength in the three, made the World balanced and nearly incorruptible. Those who go against the Requirements strike directly against the Three, attempting to knock the World out of balance. Such imbalance would break the Three and bring back Aevran, the Chaos from which the World began.

Three Components of Morality (The Moral Trinity)

The morals of Ruicism, or as he called it "the Requirements of the Members of the World," are the guidelines that all Mortals must follow in order to preserve the Three in all things. There are

three overarching themes, called Points, which have a number of morals under them. The points are based off of the Sentience Trinity, which, while known to all Trebutrois sects, never got revised or mentioned in detail again until Ruist. Ruistism has a large focus on the freedom of the Self, with no part of the belief showing any sort of pre-determinism, so its morals outline rules in awareness of that freedom.

Blood in Three

This Point focuses on the Past and traditions of the believer, and understanding when to continue looking to the past and when to let go. In general, the morals go over the Importance of the Past, the Importance of Tradition, and the Proper Denial of Past and Tradition.

Bone in Three

This Point focuses on the treatment of the Body, both of the believer and others, and also outlines behaviors to be done in the Present. In general, the morals state the Golden Rule, how to follow the Sects of Day (Sunlight, Twilight, and Moonlight), and the Preservation of Nature.

Brain in Three

This Point focuses on how the believer should use their Brain in their creativity, motivations, and predictions of the Future. In general, the morals explain the Righteous Motives, the Alteration of the Future, and the Honesty of Creative Works.

Three Components of the Afterlife (The Spirit Trinity)

Ruist's Grand Word not only put forth morals, but also a reason to follow them: the Spirit Trinity. The three Ways of the Afterlife, called Realms, sorted the energies of people into different perceptions of the world depending on their loyalty to the Way of Three in their lives. All of the Realms are not separate worlds, but layers on the mortal world, changing it into paradise, torture, or a place of fog, depending on one's fate. These layers of Realms on top of the mortal World are home to all the energy of the dead and spirits, and these Realms leaking into the mortal World is one of the main sources of raw energy.

Ambraesia

Called the Way of the Righteous, this Realm is reserved for the pure and true, who did their best in life to follow and preserve the way of Three. This Realm changes the world to a paradise, removing war, hurt, and death, and amplifying the beauty of nature. Those in Ambraesia lose their ability to see whatever they do not wish to see, leaving only the sight of what they desire to experience. They are filled with the blissful energy of the Realm, and exist to preserve the balance of the Three in death as they did in life. They have the ability to see those in Styell and Wan Deler, and may choose to, in order to remind themselves of how much of a paradise they have been blessed with.

Styell

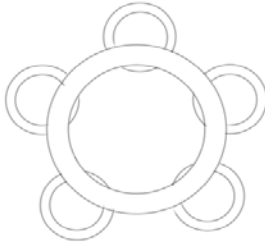
Known as the Way of the Wicked, those who fought against the Way of Three are sentenced to this Realm. The perception of those in this Realm warps into only seeing the negatives of the world, such as disease and treachery, but are cursed to never be capable of changing it. They are forced to watch their loved ones sin and die, their homeland begin to topple, and their world slowly decay. The energy of the Realm turns them into shadows of their former selves, existing only to balance the Three, and helpless to fight against it. They are always able to see those in the other Realms, to serve as a constant reminder of how far they've fallen.

Wan Deler

This last Realm is the Way of the Lost, home to those who were never Wicked, but neither were Righteous. Their perception does not change as extremely as those in Ambraesia or Styell, but their perception causes the world to be in constant fog. Along with seeing the Ambraesian and Styellan spirits, they are also able to interact with them through their energy, either causing discomfort to the Ambraesians or relief to the Syellans. The energies of those placed in Wan Deler is the strongest in terms of its effect on Mortals; their closeness with the world as Mortals see it causes more of their Energy to leak into the Mortal world than the other Realms.

B. Fjellgard Religions

1. Luvica



Beliefs:

- There are many gods
- Magic is a gift from the gods
- Everyone is descended from the gods, and each person is connected to one more strongly than the others (which determines their strengths, weaknesses and personality)
- The afterlife is going to live with the gods in their city

The Precursor:

- A very long time ago, the northern lands were occupied by fractious tribes, all of whom worshipped their own god or gods

Adalbern, the god of strength and valor

Frida, the goddess of the wild

Gundhram, the god of drinking and revelry

Hengist, the god of patience and diligence

Isolde, the goddess of tradesmen and crafters

And several minor deities and spirits

- These tribes intermingled and spread their particular gods around for a long time, until most of them had similar beliefs that varied in detail

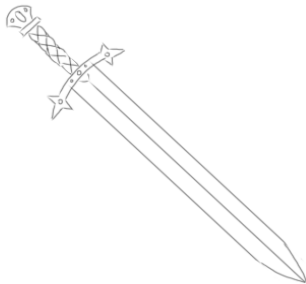
The Unification:

- One of the tribes, the chieftain of whom considered himself the chosen of Adalbern, started

expanding, conquering its neighbor tribes

- As it grew, it absorbed the various beliefs of the tribes that it conquered, merging them with its own
- After many years of conflict, all of the tribes were united under one banner, under the control of the chieftain Ludovicus

2. Stronism



Beliefs:

- There is one god
- The magic energy is the essence of God, and to use it for your own purposes is sacrilegious
- Followers are the chosen of God, and it is their mission to purge the blasphemers from the world

The Founder:

- Kristoffer Ahlstrom was a soldier in the town of Krakenfjord, on the coast of the northwestern mountains
- He was a bit on the crazy side and never liked magic-users, ever since a renegade made killed his mother
- One day, he lashed out and killed a mage who he believed was attacking him (in reality, she was just using an incantation to purify some water, but he happened to be standing right in front of her at the time)
- He was banished into the mountains for this crime, a typical form of severe punishment in the area
- He wandered for a couple days, and then, starving and dehydrated, he had a vision on a

mountaintop; god was speaking to him, and told him that the magical power in the air was his essence. It was a gift for the pure of heart and should only be used for the benefit of others. Those who used it for their own purposes -- such as mages -- were blasphemers and should be put down.

- He built the first Ahlstronic temple -- although at the time he did not call it such -- at the top of that mountain, where he shortly thereafter died from dehydration and exposure

The Disciples:

- Almost ten years after Kristoffer's death, his temple was discovered by a group of explorers from a nearby town. Although little more than a ring of piled stones and a few crudely-carved tablets, it still captured their interest.
- Upon reading the tablets, they were said to have felt a mystical, indefinable presence, and heard a ghostly voice whispering to them on the wind.
- Being a superstitious lot, most of them were instantly converted
- One of them, a magic-user, tried to tell the rest that it was just fake mysticism
- But this only served to convince the others more, and the leader of the group killed the mage
- The remaining five became Disciples, and each went off to a different town to preach
- However, due to differences of opinion and belief, as time went on these five started preaching slightly different concepts, leading to five distinct sects

Aleksandrianism -- Disciple Aleksander: All magic-users are evil, whether they use their power for selfish or altruistic purposes. God is intangible, invisible, nothing more than the power in the air.

♠ Doesn't like Bjarnism

Bjarnism -- Disciple Bjarne: God was once a real, physical person, and shall be reincarnated someday. Also, we can use magic because we are God's chosen, but nobody else can.

♠ Doesn't like Aleksandrianism

Cecilism -- Disciple Cecilia: Magic-users are not inherently evil, but to use the power -- or touch the essence of God -- will drive one insane if done too much.

♠ Likes Isabelism

Fredrikism -- Disciple Frederik: To use magic is to steal from God. Therefore, all magic-users are in need of punishment, but not necessarily execution. God was once a physical person, but

when he ascended to godhood he became ethereal.

♠ Mostly neutral towards the other sects

Isabelism -- Disciple Isabella: We are not hunters, but stewards, chosen by God to protect the weak from those who would use magic against them.

♠ Doesn't like Aleksandrianism

- Each of these sects formed and spread from their own town, but all of them were located in the mountains around Krakenfjord

The Persecution:

- Due to the divisive and dangerous nature of their message, believers in Ahlstronism were not generally accepted in other towns. After a few raids on neighboring villages by Ahlstronian 'hunters', where mages were abducted and carried off to be executed, there came a backlash
- The neighboring towns formed a militia and came after the Ahlstronians, killing many of them and driving them back into the mountains
- The Isabelites blamed the others for being too aggressive, forcing the sects farther apart
- Each sect founded a temple atop a particular mountain, inspired by Ahlstrom's original mountaintop shrine
- Since Ahlstronians still came under semi-frequent attack and persecution, these temples were more akin to fortresses than monasteries
- Here they lived in seclusion for decades, until they realized they would have to spread their beliefs and convert others to their cause, or they would die out
- There was argument between the sects about who should lead, and it was finally decided that a ruling council would be formed with one member from each sect, and this council would make the decisions

The Council:

- The Council consists of five members

The Sword of God (Aleksandrianism)

The Will of God (Bjarnism)

The Grace of God (Cecilism)

The Gaze of God (Fredrikism)

The Shield of God (Isabelism)

- A central, master cathedral was built on the site of Ahlstrom's original shrine, where the Council would meet and new converts would be brought. Each sect retained their own fortress-temples and operated mostly independently, except when there was an issue large enough to warrant the attention of the Council

The First Attacks:

- Not much was done after the first Council meeting. The Aleksandronites, frustrated with their fellows' lack of action, led an attack against a nearby town that they believed to be corrupted by the taint of magic-users
- Whipped into a holy frenzy by their leaders, they killed most of the adults in the town, taking away any children young enough to have been "spared their parents' madness" and bringing them back to the monastery to be properly brought up
- The other sects were angry, but couldn't deny the results (except the Isabelites, who almost attacked their fellows, enraged by the senseless violence)
- This started a tradition; the Council agreed (some grudgingly) that the best way to get new converts was to take children before they could be corrupted
- Not wanting to take away the children of innocents, they agreed to only take the orphans of the magic-users they put down, and only if they were young enough to still be pure of heart and mind

The Reformation:

- For the next few decades, the Ahlstronians mounted semi-regular raids on the surrounding towns and villages, taking the orphans of those unlucky enough to meet with their judgment
 - After a while, they became known throughout the land, and the local towns started banding together to protect themselves
 - The leader of the Isabelites at the time pleaded with her fellows to stop the violence, claiming that the killing of innocents was not God's will
 - The others agreed to meet and talk about it, and a code of morals was set down
- I. Never kill an innocent who is unblemished by the taint of magic
 - II. Before a magic-user is sentenced to death, their morality and history must be examined and

found wanting

III. Never take others' property unless it was owned by one who was rightfully killed

IV. Never do harm to the lands, homes or possessions of those who have not been found worthy of execution

V. Never take a child older than ten winters, or one who has either parent still alive

- This code, known as the Five Precepts, was engraved on stone tablets and given to the five sects
- Under its guidance, they continued their work for years, until the king of a bordering province decided to wipe them out

The Harrowing:

- The army of Lordenbach marched into the mountains, set on driving out the infamous 'mountain warrior-priests' that had been harassing the lands around for decades
- The Ahlstronians, more familiar with the mountain terrain and firm in the belief that they were doing God's work, fought back for a long time and reaped a deadly tally among their foes, but were steadily pushed back
- The temples of the Cecilites and Fredrikites were destroyed, their disciples either killed, captured, or driven into the wilderness
- The Bjarnites managed to hold out due to their magic power, the Aleksandrites due to their martial skill and ferocity, and the Isabelites because they had the best defenses, but the army surrounded and laid siege their temples
- After several long years of conflict, the remaining temples were destroyed, but many of the Ahlstronians survived and escaped into the wilderness
- The surviving leader of the Aleksandrites vowed revenge against the corrupt king who had ordered their destruction, but the Isabelites encouraged safety through obscurity, saying they should lie low for a while
- The remaining Aleksandrites, frustrated by what they saw as cowardice on the part of their comrades and blaming the weaker sects for their defeat, traveled east through the forest towards the other mountains
- The Isabelites and Bjarnites spread out across the land, integrating into towns, converting followers in secret, and starting hidden underground temples

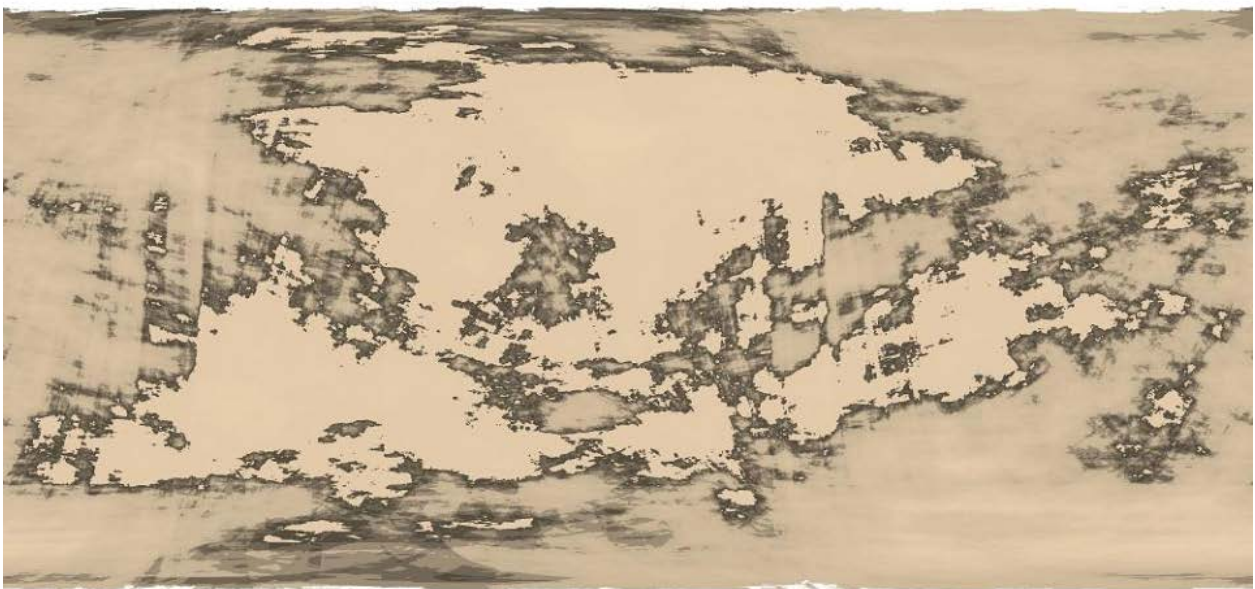
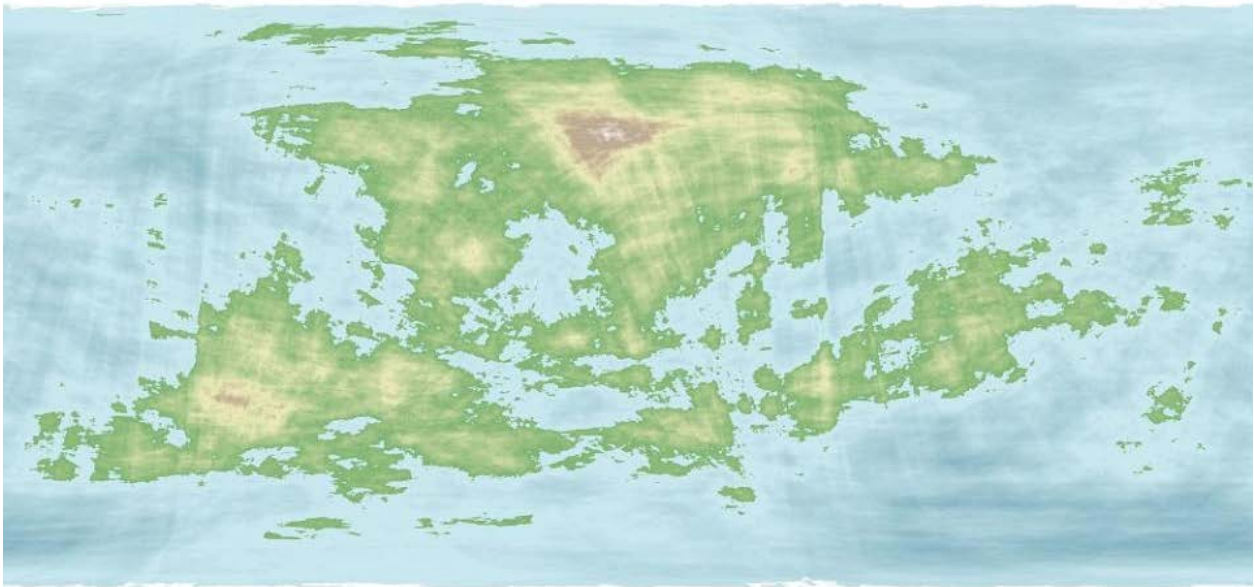
7. Works Cited

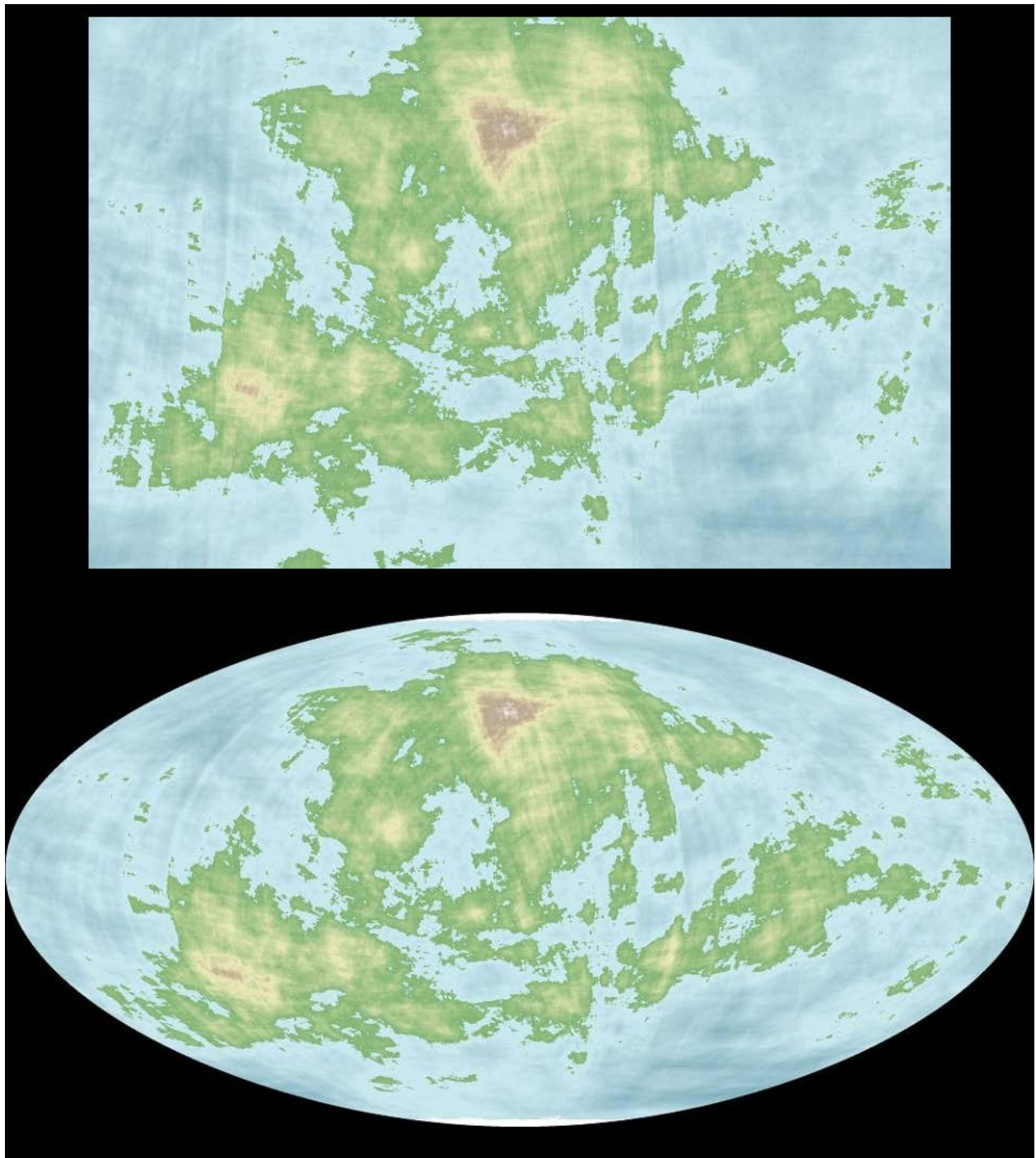
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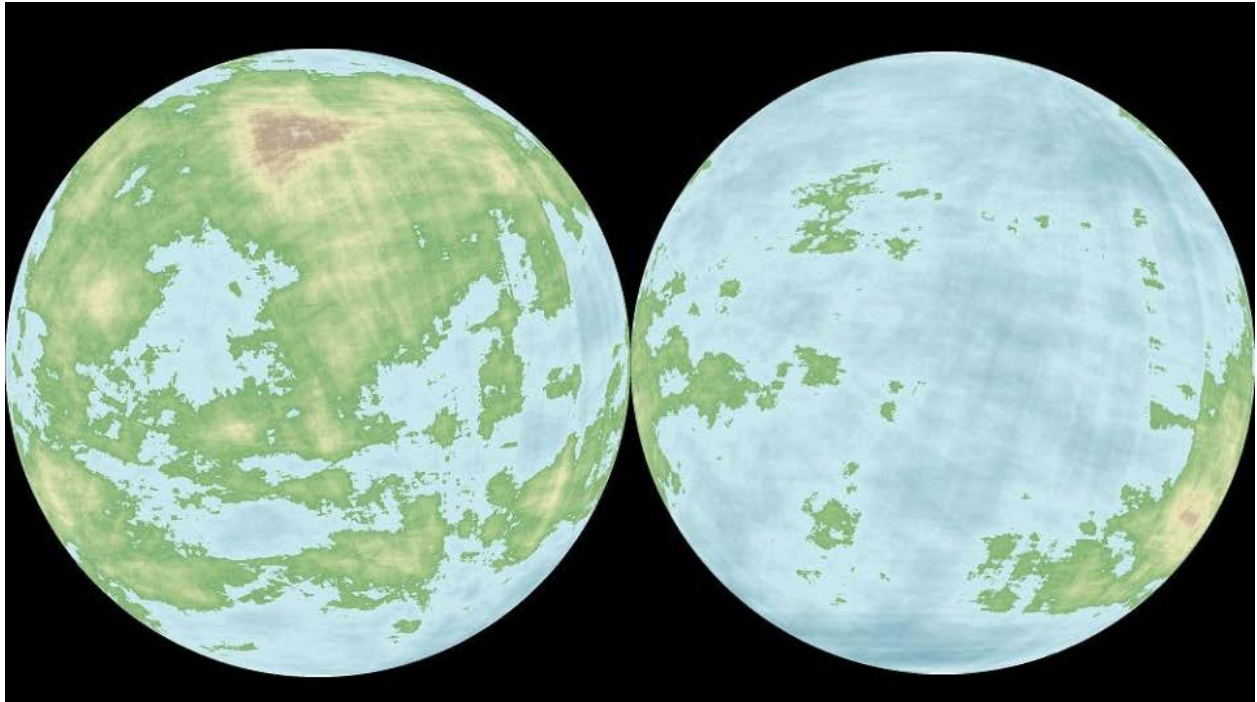
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8. World Background and Ways of the Reslys Region

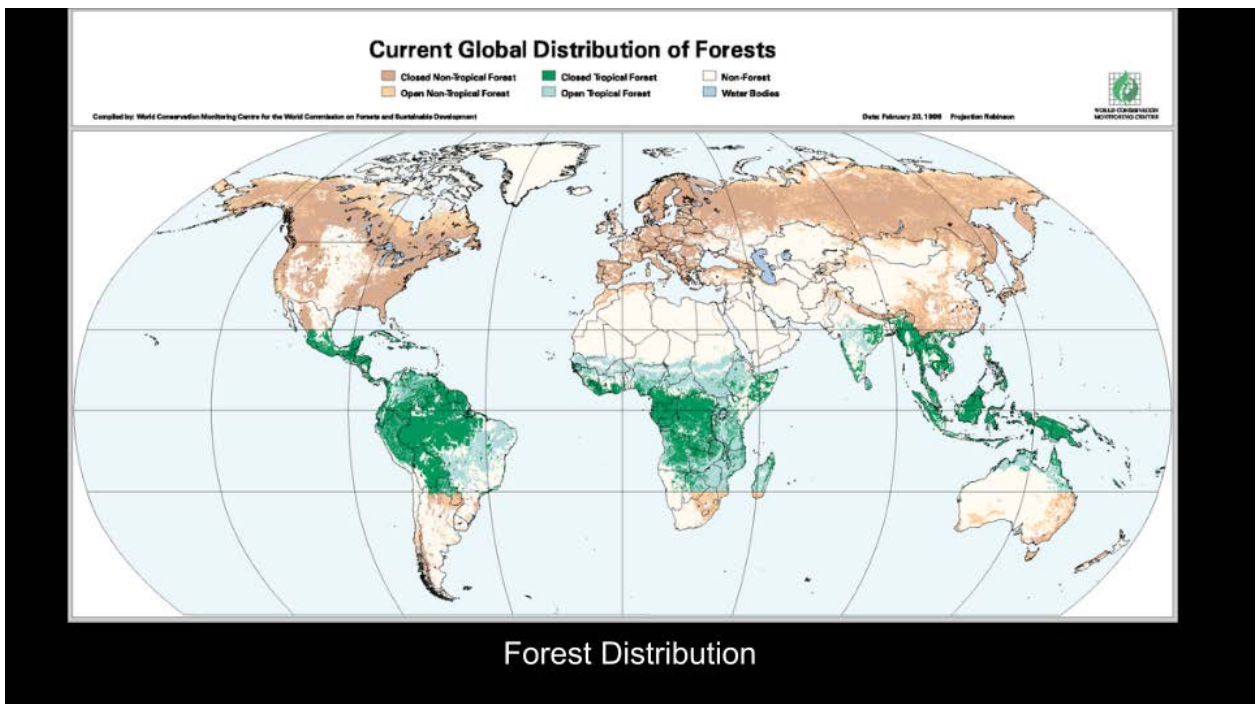
A. PowerPoints of Information and References

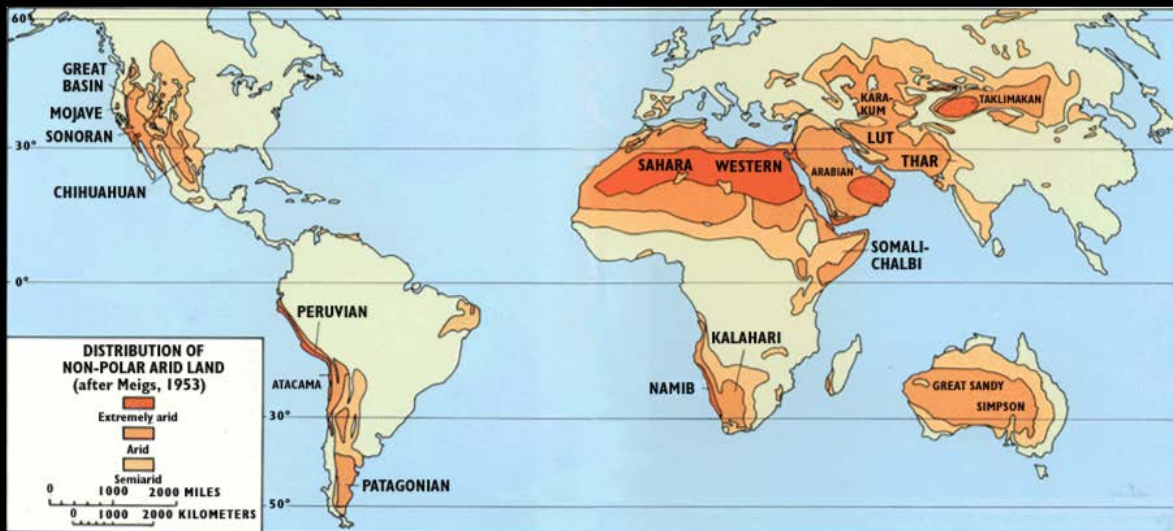






Various types of maps on the world as a whole





Desert Distribution

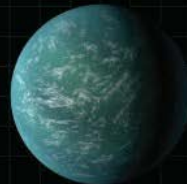
Kepler's Habitable Zone Line Up



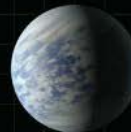
The habitable zone corresponds to the range of orbital distances where liquid water can exist on a planet's surface.

Sub-Neptune-size

Super-Earth-size



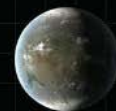
Kepler-22b
2.4 R_{\oplus}



Kepler-69c
1.7 R_{\oplus}



Kepler-62e
1.6 R_{\oplus}

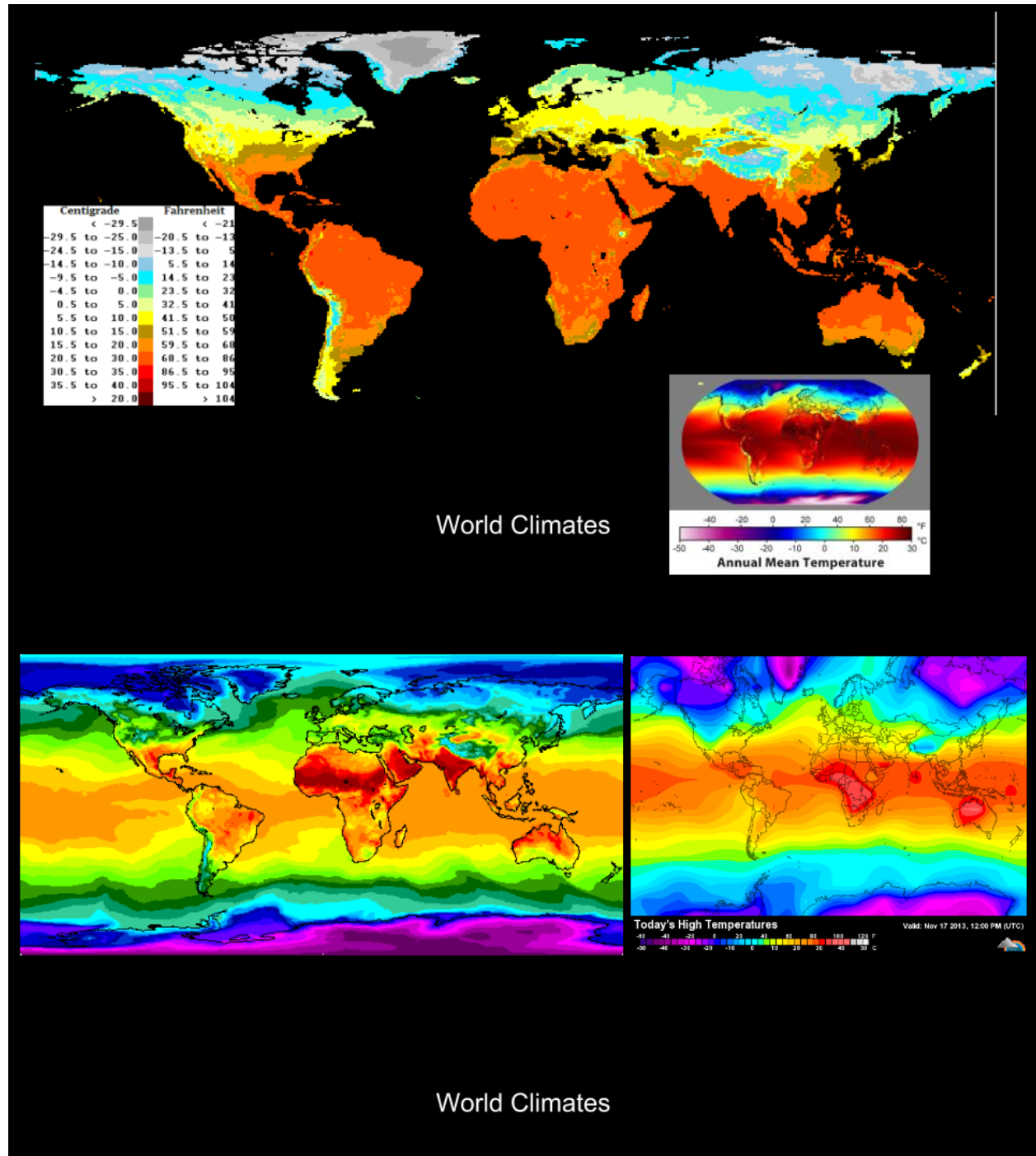


Kepler-62f
1.4 R_{\oplus}



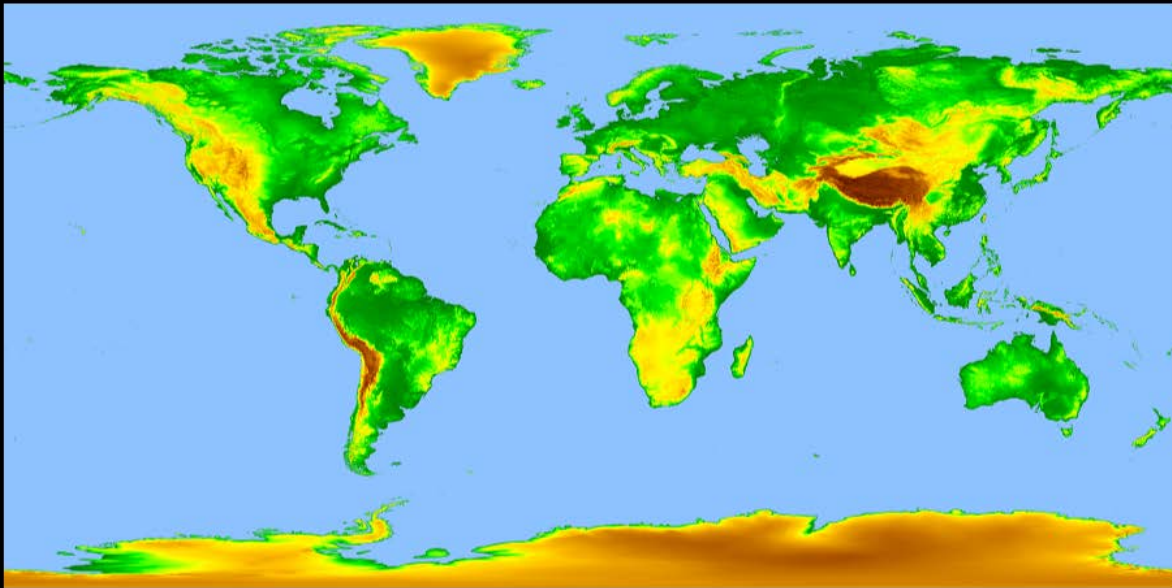
Earth
1.0 R_{\oplus}

Planet Scale Possibilities





World Heightmap



World Heightmap

Reference for world creation



General map of Medieval Europe, showing main country bounds

Population (Millions)

Year	FRANCE	ENGLAND	HUNGARY
~850	7	2.5	1
~1220	16	3.25	1.2
~1340	20.2	3	5

"Medieval France tops the list, with a 14th-century density upwards of 100 people/sq. mile. The French were blessed with an abundance of arable countryside, waiting to be farmed. Modern France has more than twice this many people. Germany, with a slightly less perfect climate and a lower percentage of arable land, averaged more like 90 people/sq. mile. Italy was similar (lots of hills and rocky areas). The British Isles were the least populous, with a little more than 40 people per square mile, most of them clustered in the southern half of the isles."

Food

- Spring and Fall Crops
 - Rye (Breads) (\$)
 - Wheat (Breads) (\$)
 - Barley (Beers) (\$)
 - Oats (Animal food)
 - Flax (Rope)
 - Peas
 - Beans
 - Vegetables (family crop)
- Fish
- Meat
- Eggs
- Honey
- Seasoning
- Milks and Butters

Trade Goods

- “Cash Crops” (\$)
- Spices
- Groceries
- Linen
- Metals
- Oils
- Wax
- Paper
- Wood
- Wine
- Horses
- Cloth
- Glass
- Furs
- Salt

General Types of Civilization Centers

- **Villages**
 - 20 to 1,000 people
 - 50-300 average
 - Thousands in a Kingdom
 - Agrarian communities in safe areas
 - Basic food source
 - Orchard village = hamlet
- **Towns**
 - 1,000-8,000 people
 - 2,500 average
 - Walls only if frequently threatened
- **Cities**
 - 8,000-12,000 people
 - 10,000 average
 - Few cities in this population range
 - Centers of scholarly pursuits
 - Rare exception: Big City
- **Big Cities**
 - 12,000-100,000 people
 - Rarely exceed 100,000
 - Examples:
 - London (25,000-40,000)
 - Paris (50,000-80,000)
 - Genoa (75,000-100,000),
 - Venice (100,000+)

Late Medieval information and references for country generation

9. Notes on World Religions

- China

- TAOISM

- Founder: Lao-Tse

- Servant of the State, kept archives for the court

- Lived in a time of social unrest

- Chose to retire from the world, wrote down teachings

- Founded 4th century BC

- Traditional version founded same time as Confucianism

- Holy scripture: Tao Te Ching

- Many edits and additions since Lao-Tse

- Two centuries later: Chuang-tse

- Wrote commentary on Tao Te Ching

- Became sacred writing of Taoism

- Belief in the Tao, or Way

- Law of Man, Earth, Heaven, and Tao

- Ethics of high character

- Repay injury with kindness

- Meet everything with goodness

- Commit to the Tao

- Be yourself, conform to nature

- Action is futile, acceptance brings happiness

- MODERN TAOISM

- Developed gods during the Christian era

- Manifestations of the Tao

- Lao-Tse one of the gods

- Priesthood organized

- Priests can use magic to save people from Hell

- System of Heavens and Hells

- Inspired by Buddhism

- CONFUCIANISM

- An ethical philosophy, not a religion
- Innovator: Confucius
 - Not a founder, ideas existed before him
 - Worked as a man of the state, became a teacher
 - Taught beliefs and practices of the past
- Practices existed pre-2000BC, revived ~570BC
- Books: The Classics
 - Books of History, Poetry, Changes, and Rites
 - 200 years later, Disciple Mencius wrote response work, Works of Mencius
- Ethical Teachings
 - Humans are good, evil is unnatural
 - Humans are free willed
 - Virtue is its own reward
 - There is no help by any god(s)
- Five important Relationships
 - Ruler and Subject, Father and Son, Elder bro and Younger bro, Husband and Wife, Friend

and Friend

- Ancestor Worship
 - Practice of China, approved by Confucius

- LATER CONFUCIANISM

- Confucius raised to deity level
 - Ceremonies by scholars
 - Sacrifices out of honor
- New practices heavily mirror religion, though motives are out of respect rather than seeking

salvation

- India

- HINDUISM

- The Beginning
 - The Pre-Vedic Period: City found from pre-3000BC, believed to be source of Indian

religion

- Ideas of Karma, reincarnation, yoga, asceticism, and worship of a “mother goddess”
 - City’s religion had no shared traits with Aryan religions
 - The Vedic Period: Pre-Aryan invasions ~1500BC
 - VEDIC RELIGION
 - Holy book - Rig-Veda
 - Oldest of India’s holy books
 - Focused on the “here and now” of life
 - Practiced ritual in hopes of better flocks and harvest
 - Natural gods: sun, moon, sky, etc.
 - Three categories: Earth, Sky, Atmosphere
 - 33 main gods, some more worshipped than others
 - Gods personifications of worldly things rather than ideas
 - Ritual by sacrifices
 - Special days for sacrifice to certain gods
 - Offerings of what herds and pastures provided
 - Belief in magic
 - Book Atharva-Veda lists charms for any occasion
 - Additions after the Aryan invasions
 - Belief in the afterlife
 - Abode of the dead for the good people seen as idealization of earthly life
 - Bad people thrown into a bottomless pit
- The Upanishadic Period: 500BC, ½ millennium after Rig-Veda
 - Shifted to pessimistic outlook on life
 - Love of life changed to escaping life
 - Rebirth
 - Unimportant concept in Rig-Veda, became focus of religion
 - All things caught in cycle of rebirth, religion is a way of escaping the wheel
- Karma
 - Law of sowing and reaping
 - Good and bad Karma
 - Powered by the wheel of rebirth

- Stopping Karma is a way to escape
- Caste system developed
- Old gods became singular monism - All is God
- Sacrifice and rituals became more complex
 - Brahmins - priests of sacrifice
 - BRAHMAN BELIEF
 - Creator god Brihaspati
 - Life in 4 parts - student, householder, hermit, ascetic
 - Priestly books: Brahmanas
 - New version of old books
 - Focused on sacrifice
 - Salvation by Knowledge
 - Escape rebirth by being absorbed into World Soul of Brihaspati
 - Saved by having complete understanding
 - Complete understanding of what varies
 - Six main schools of thought
 - Identity with God, the illusion of life, etc
 - Methods of understanding varies
 - Meditation, yoga, self-salvation
 - Religion of the philosophers
- Beliefs evolve over time, reform movements create new beliefs
 - Temples built for god(s) or other worshiped things
 - Started ~6th century BC
 - Some religions require pilgrimage
- Caste system fully ingrained into Indian culture
- Beliefs split based on beliefs in god(s)
 - Practical agnosticism/atheism
 - BUDDHISM
 - Founder: Gautama
 - Born in luxury, raised away from ugliness and sickness
 - Discovered ugliness, became unsettled

- Became hermit in attempt to find salvation
- Six years in extreme living conditions
- Almost died, determined that path did not lead to salvation
- Chose to meditate under Bo tree
- Saw a great light
 - Became the Buddha (Enlightened One)
- Entered state of Nirvana
 - Nirvana - salvation
 - Full understanding of suffering and pain
- Founded 6th century BC
- Escape from suffering: The Eightfold Path and the Noble Truths
 - The Noble Truth of...
 - ...Suffering: birth, decay, illness, death, hate, distance from love, failure to obtain desire, etc.
 - ...The Cause of Suffering: Thirst or desire that leads to rebirth
 - ...The Cessation of Suffering: Destruction of desire or thirst
 - ...The Path That Leads to the Cessation of Suffering: The Eightfold Path, which consists in:
 - Right Views, Right Aspirations, Right Speech, Right Livelihood, Right Endeavor, Right Mindfulness, Right Conduct, Right Meditation
 - Karma and rebirth, virtue of non-injury, knowledge is a weapon against suffering
- EARLY BUDDHISM
 - No gods
 - Buddha believed in gods, but said they had no place in salvation
 - No rituals or priesthood
 - Buddha gathered followers, they became missionaries
 - The Precepts placed on disciples
 - Do not lie, commit adultery, steal, lie, or drink
 - Do not eat at forbidden times; dance, sing, or hear music; not use cosmetics or perfumes; not to sleep on a high bed; not to receive gold or silver
- LATER BUDDHISM

- Temples and monasteries built
- Holy scriptures: the Tripitaka
 - Compilation of Buddha's teachings and stories
 - Written long after Buddha's death
- "Formula" for following the order of Buddha
 - "I take my refuge in the Buddha, I take my refuge in the Dharma, I take my refuge in the Sangha"

- Relics developed around Buddha
- Pilgrimage to holy spots to earn favor of Buddha
- Addition of Heaven and Hells
 - "Pure Land" for salvation, tortures for unsaveable lives
- Require the assistance of a god figure (Buddha(s)) for salvation
 - Lost Buddha's message of salvation being focused on the self
- Two sects form
 - MAHAYANA
 - The "greater vehicle" of the North
 - Goal to become a Buddha
 - Done over ten steps over multiple lifetimes
 - People who vow to become future Buddha - Bodhisattva
 - Don't need to be a priest
 - Can be anyone
 - Late stage Bodhisattva become "cosmic helpers"
 - Saviors of mankind, help others on journey
 - Gautama just one of multiple Buddhas
 - Five principal Buddhas
 - Eternal Buddha = Dharmakaya, manifestation of Vishnu or Siva
 - Buddhas and late Bodhisttvas worshiped
 - Amitabha most worshiped of the Bodhisattvas
 - Refused salvation until all others were saved
- HINAYANA
 - The "lesser vehicle" of the South

- Goal to become an Arhat
- Reach Nirvana in present life
- Salvation of the self
- Uses entire life for salvation
- JAINISM
 - Founded by Mahavira
 - Born into luxury, gave it up to live as a hermit
 - Attained mastery of himself and the world
 - Gathered followers, 23 of them achieved salvation with him
 - Founded 6th century BC
 - Same time as Buddha
 - Gods exist, but do not aid
 - Salvation through asceticism
 - Worldly control of the self
 - Great emphasis on Ahimsa (non-violence)
 - Extreme forms of practice, cannot harm even an insect
 - Sacred scriptures: Agamas
 - Three Jewels - three main principals
 - Right knowledge, right faith, right conduct
- Belief in supreme God or a personal God
- The theistic sects of Vishunites and Sivaitees
- VISHUNITES
 - Worship Vishnu
 - Minor god from Rig-Veda
 - Worshiped through his 10 incarnations
 - Of incarnations, Rama and Krishna most important
 - Rama's tale written in the Ramayana
 - Krishna most popular of the incarnations
- SIVAITEES
 - Worship Siva and his wife
 - Many names for the two, represent different sides

- Worshiped directly
- Extreme sacrificial worship
 - Widow burning, excessive torture before death, etc.
- SIKHISM
 - Founded by Nanak
 - Contemporary of Martin Luther
 - Heard call of God at 36, preached a way to combine faiths
 - Inspired by Kabir, a great poet
 - Founded ~1500
 - Around the time of the Protestant Reformation
 - Area at the time was Hindus vs. Mohammedans
 - Rejected idols and the caste system
 - Preached importance of Guru, the teacher
 - Salvation through the Guru
 - Ten Gurus total, Nanak the first
 - Fifth Guru wrote the Granth
 - Tenth Guru
 - Made believers into a small army
 - Took part of the Mogul Empire
 - Land became Punjab
 - Declared the Granth to be the next and final Guru
 - Holy book: Granth
 - Declared the final Guru by the tenth Guru
 - Worshiped
 - Read 24/7
- Belief in general pantheism
- VILLAGE RELIGIONS
 - 700k villages across India
 - People in villages outnumber those in cities
 - Local deities alongside main gods
 - Most ritual dedicated to local deities

- Temples made in their honor
- Some constant traits through all different reforms of Hinduism after the Vedic period
 - Belief in Karma
 - Belief in transmigration of souls
 - Pessimistic view of life, seeking release
 - High regard for the ascetic
 - Dominant emphasis on passive virtue
 - Deep reverence for the Vedas
 - Underlying pantheism or acceptance of the possibility of pantheism
 - Practice of the Dharma
 - Observance of the Caste

Other Religions

- Agnosticism
 - One cannot know/decide whether God exists
 - Coined term in 1869
 - Thomas Henry Huxley
 - Thought existed before then without solid term for it
 - Different levels/types of agnostics
 - Agnostic atheism
 - The view of those who do not believe in the existence of any deity, but do not claim to know if a deity does or does not exist
 - Agnostic theism
 - The view of those who do not claim to know of the existence of any deity, but still believe in such an existence
 - Apathetic/pragmatic agnosticism
 - The view that there is no proof of either the existence or nonexistence of any deity, but since any deity that may exist appears unconcerned for the universe or the welfare of its inhabitants, the question is largely academic.
 - Strong agnosticism (also "hard", "closed", "strict", or "permanent agnosticism")

- The view that the question of the existence or nonexistence of a deity or deities, and the nature of ultimate reality, is unknowable by reason of our natural inability to verify any experience with anything but another subjective experience

- "I cannot know whether a deity exists or not, and neither can you."

- Weak agnosticism (also called "soft", "open", "empirical", or "temporal agnosticism")

- The view that the existence or nonexistence of any deities is currently unknown but is not necessarily unknowable; therefore, one will withhold judgment until evidence, if any, becomes available

- "I don't know whether any deities exist or not, but maybe one day, if there is evidence, we can find something out."

- Often criticized by both atheists and theists

- Seen as "fence sitting," much like bisexuality

- Theist argument: not being able to see or hold some specific thing does not necessarily negate its existence

- Atheist argument: being agnostic is functionally the same as being atheist

- Ignosticism

- Disputed subcategory of Agnosticism

- Coined 1960s

- Sherwin Wine, rabbi

- The theological position that every other theological position assumes too much

- Including (but not limited to) concepts of:

- God(s)

- faith

- spirituality

- heaven

- hell

- afterlife

- damnation

- salvation

- sin

- the soul

- Coherent definition of a given religious term or theological concept must be presented before the question of the existence or nature of said term can be meaningfully discussed

- If that definition is falsifiable, the ignostic takes the theological noncognitivist position that the question of the existence or nature referred to by the term, for the given definition, is meaningless

- The term "God" does not refer to anything that may or may not exist, therefore the term "God" has no literal significance

- A simplified maxim on the subject:

- An atheist would say, 'I don't believe God exists'

- An agnostic would say, 'I don't know whether or not God exists';

- An ignostic would say, 'I don't know what you mean when you say, "God exists"'

- Language, Truth, and Logic by A. J. Ayer explores concept

- One could not speak of God's existence, or even the probability of God's existence, since the concept itself was unverifiable and thus nonsensical

- Rules out atheism, agnosticism, and theism because all three positions assume that the sentence "God exists" is meaningful

- Theodore Drange also explores concept deeply

- Any stance on "Does God exist?" is made with respect to a particular concept of what one claims to consider "God" to represent

- Quote: "Since the word "God" has many different meanings, it is possible for the sentence "God exists" to express many different propositions. What we need to do is to focus on each proposition separately. ... For each different sense of the term "God," there will be theists, atheists, and agnostics relative to that concept of God"

- Must determine what type of God is being spoken about

- A child's concept generally has a simple and coherent meaning, based on an anthropomorphic conception of god

- Many philosophers and theologians have rejected this conception of god while affirming belief in another conception of god

- Zoroastrianism

- Founding, Founders and Books

- Founded over one thousand years BC ago

- Zoroaster (or Zarathustra) re-categorized Iranian gods
 - Religious philosopher
- Wrote the Avesta, gathering of texts for Zoroastrianism
 - Yasna
 - Also name of worship ceremony
 - Yasna Haptanghaiti
 - Worship in Seven Chapters
 - Seven hymns
 - Gathas
 - 17 hymns
- Nature of Gods
 - Two forces
 - Ahura Mazda
 - Illuminating Wisdom
 - Source of all Good
 - Tries to maintain world
 - Angra Mainyu
 - Destructive Spirit
 - Source of all Evil
 - Tries to destroy world
- Beliefs
 - Free Will is granted to all
 - Active participation in life through good deeds is necessary
 - Ensures happiness and keeps chaos at bay
 - Ahura Mazda will ultimately prevail over the evil Angra Mainyu
 - The universe will undergo a cosmic renovation and time will end
 - All souls will return to Ahura
 - Hell is a reforming place, not a damning one
 - The dead will return to life
 - The Divine Sparks
 - The Amesha Spentas

- "Bounteous Immortals"
 - Each representative of one aspect of Creation
 - Assisted by a league of lesser principles: Yazatas
 - Each again a hypostasis of a moral or physical aspect of creation
- Water and Fire
 - Agents of ritual purity
 - Respectively the second and last primordial elements to have been created
 - Fire has its origin in the waters
 - Both are considered life-sustaining
 - Prayers made in front of firelight
 - Fire is considered a medium through which spiritual insight and wisdom is gained
 - Water is considered the source of wisdom
- Spirits and Life/Death
 - Mortals are expected to actively participate in the continuing battle between truth and falsehood
- The urvan (soul) of an individual is still united with its fravashi (guardian spirit)
 - Fravashi have existed since Mazda created the universe
 - During life, the fravashi acts as a guardian and protector
 - On the fourth day after death, the soul is reunited with its fravashi
 - The experiences of life in the material world are collected for the continuing battle in the spiritual world
- No belief in reincarnation
- Corpses bring decay (druj), vessel for Angra Mainyu
 - Corpses placed on Towers of Silence
 - Birds of prey eat corpses from above to not pollute world
- Discordianism
 - Founding, Founders and Books
 - Originally founded 1958
 - Volume One of Principia Discordia written 1965
 - Written by pseudonyms
 - Malaclypse the Younger

- Omar Khayyam Ravenhurst
- Holy Book: Principa Discordia
 - Volume One lost to a garbage man
 - Volume Four is current version
 - References to Holy Book of Truth, or HBT
 - No HBT has been found
- Disputed as a parody religion
 - Unsure whether it actually sees itself as a belief or not
 - Satire? Parody? We'll never really know
- Honor Eris
 - Eris/Discordia – Greco-Roman goddess of Chaos
 - Cause of the Trojan War from the Apple of Discord
 - Discordia wasn't invited to a party - The Original Snub
- Organization
 - You are free to make one
 - Undeclared sects: part of Legion of Dynamic Discord, called Legionnaires
 - POEE: Paratheo-Anametamystikhood of Eris Esoteric
 - Sect written about most in PD
 - Followed by writers
 - Organized with 5 Degrees:
 - There is the neophyte, or LEGIONNAIRE DISCIPLE
 - The LEGIONNAIRE DEACON
 - An Ordained POEE PRIEST/PRIESTESS or a CHAPLAIN
 - The HIGH PRIEST, the Polyfather
 - And POEE POPE
 - "POEE LEGIONNAIRE DISCIPLES are authorized to initiate others as Discordian Society Legionnaires. PRIESTS appoint their own DEACONS. The POLYFATHER ordains Priests. I don't know about the POPES" -PD
 - Episkopos
 - Overseers of Discordian Sects
 - Speak to Eris with the pineal gland

- May say completely different or contradictory things, but all are valid
- Everyone is a Pope
 - A Pope has the right:
 - To invoke infallibility at any time, including retroactively.
 - To completely rework the Erisian church.
 - To baptize, marry, and bury (with the permission of the deceased in the latter two cases).
 - To excommunicate, de-excommunicate, re-excommunicate, and de-re-excommunicate (no backsies!) both him-/her-/it-/them-/your-/our-/Him-/Her-/It-/Them-/Your-/Our-self/selves and others (if any).
 - To perform all rites and functions deemed inappropriate for a Pope of Discordia.
- Philosophy
 - Belief that disharmony and chaos are equally valid aspects of reality
 - Two Principles
 - Aneristic Principle: Apparent order
 - Eristic Principle: Apparent disorder
 - Both are manmade concepts and are artificial divisions of pure chaos
 - Reality is viewed with a bias lens: the brain
 - What we see is not reality, but ideas-about-reality
 - Real Truth is beyond observation
 - Order means that our lens matches what we see, Disorder means it doesn't, both mean nothing for reality
 - All things are true "just because"
 - Chao - Single Unit of Chaos
 - Sacred Chao - symbol of Discordianism
 - Resembles Yin-Yang, but with a pentagram and the Golden Apple of Discord
 - Law of Fives
 - The Law: "The Law of Fives states simply that: All things happen in fives, or are divisible by or are multiples of five, or are somehow directly or indirectly appropriate to 5. The Law of Fives is never wrong." -PD
 - Conformation bias ensures that the Law of Fives is always true
 - Everything is five if you try hard enough

- Observations can change with the bias of the observer
- Serious vs. Non-Serious, or The Curse of Greyface
 - One cannot be too serious or too non-serious
 - Greyface
 - Lived in 1166BCE, was too serious
 - Gained followers and spread word of order
 - Caused split in view with order vs. disorder
 - Created Curse of Greyface, affliction of seriousness and distinction
- Law of Eristic Escalation
 - Imposition of Order = Escalation of Chaos
 - The more order is imposed the longer it takes for the chaos to arise and the greater the chaos that arises
 - Similar to Tao Te Ching
 - "the more laws and orders are written, the more thieves there are"
- The Pentabarf
 - The Doctorine of Discordianism
 - There is no Goddess but Goddess and She is Your Goddess. There is no Movement but The Erisian Movement and it is The Erisian Movement. And every Golden Apple Corps is the beloved home of a Golden Worm.
 - A Discordian Shall Always use the Official Discordian Document Numbering System.
 - A Discordian is required to, the first Friday after his illumination, Go Off Alone & Partake Joyously of a Hot Dog; this Devotive Ceremony to Remonstrate against the popular Paganisms of the Day: of Roman Catholic Christendom (no meat on Friday), of Judaism (no meat of pork), of Hindu Peoples (no meat of beef), of Buddhists (no meat of animal), and of Discordians (no hot dog buns).
 - A Discordian shall Partake of No Hot Dog Buns, for Such was the Solace of Our Goddess when She was Confronted with The Original Snub.
 - A Discordian is Prohibited from Believing What he reads.
 - Last doctorine Epimenides paradox ("All Cretans are liars")
- Five Tons of Flax
 - Answer to question "Is there an essential meaning behind POEE?"

- Reference to Zen story about three pounds of flax
- Slogan for universal answer to philosophical questions
- Pineal Gland
 - Most important part of human body
 - Common saying "Consult your pineal gland"
 - PG believed to release chemicals responsible for dreaming and other mystical states
 - Called the seat of the soul or the third eye
- Discordian Calendar
 - Abbreviation YOLD, Year of Our Lady of Discord
 - 1 YOLD is 1166BC
 - Year starting the Curse of Greyface

10. Background on Fjellgard's Religions and Regions

- Western Religions

- **Judaism**

- The Culture

- The Beginning

- Hammurabi's Code: ancient set of laws developed in Babylon at around the same time as Abraham lived. Thought to perhaps have had some influence on early Judaism.
 - Early Hebrews were nomads, wandering from place to place. Their religion was very loose and informal at this point. Also polytheistic.
 - They wandered into Egypt, and were at first welcomed but after a while were forced into slavery.

- Moses: ~1300 B.C

- Moses' early life was not terribly eventful for influential on this topic. He enters the world stage when he sees an Egyptian mistreating a slave, and in a fit of rage kills him.
 - Moses flees Egypt, and goes to the Arabian Peninsula to become a herdsman (perhaps explaining some of the importance of the 'shepherd' metaphor?).
 - When he returns some years later, he frees the slaves and escapes with them across the Red Sea.

- Canaan

- After the historic crossing of the Red Sea, the Hebrews moved into Canaan and took it over. Here begins the line of Jewish kings:

- Saul: the first ruler

- David: the best king
 - Many Jews still look back on David's rule as the golden age for their people.
 - Solomon
- The Split
 - When Solomon died, the empire split into north and south halves due to political and ideological differences.
 - These two halves, weaker without the support of the other, quickly fell to the surrounding countries.
 - This was the end of any form of Jewish sovereign nation.
- The Religion
 - In the beginning, Hebrew faith was very similar to the Arabian religions of the time.
 - Tribal
 - Polytheistic
 - Idolatrous
 - Animal sacrifice
 - And then Moses came along.
 - He introduced the idea of Yahweh/Jehovah (IE God), but where he got the idea is a subject of debate.
 - Possibly inspired by Egyptian or Median religion
 - The other gods were still recognized originally, but Yahweh/Jehovah was the only one he believed fit for worship.
 - Covenant with God
 - This is a prevalent feature of Jewish faith.
 - They believe that they have made some sort of pact, or covenant, with God by worshipping him.
 - This makes their feeling of duty and obligation towards Him stronger, and also makes them think of themselves as a

sort of chosen people (but then, what religious culture does not?).

- Absorption of local culture

- When the Hebrews took over Canaan, many of the local religious traditions & rituals were absorbed.

- The Prophets

- Contrary to the current meaning of the term, the original Prophets were not primarily seers of the future.
- They were mainly just religious reformers.
- They were responsible for one of the largest changes in the Hebrew religion -- the alteration of God from a localized, almost tribal God to one who rules over the entire world.
- Amos:
 - Introduced the concept that God was a god of justice
 - Also first suggested that God was interested with more than just Israel
- Hosea:
 - First spoke of God as possessing attributes such as love and mercy
- Jeremiah:
 - Put it all together
 - Eliminated the other gods
 - Said God ruled the whole world, and was supremely ethical

- Subjugation

- After the kingdom divided, it was conquered by the Persians.
- The life of the Jews steadily got worse and worse.
- Here is where the concepts of heaven and hell emerged as

compensation in a future world for the trouble they had to endure in this one.

- At first, everyone was of the opinion that Israel was suffering for its own past sins.
- But then the Deutero-Isiah way of the thinking came along, suggesting that they weren't suffering for their *own* sins, they were suffering to redeem the sins of *others*!

- This is the idea that Jesus latched onto and set out to fulfill.

- Evangelism

- Hebrews have never been particularly interested in being missionaries.
- Most conversions happened due to the dispersion of the Jewish people.

- The Old Testament was finished by the 2nd century B.C
- Judaism has never really had a single, overarching creed that defines it as a whole

- Christianity

- The Beginning

- Christianity was, of course, based off Judaism.
- Jesus was born in a time of oppression for the Jews, when everyone believed in the messiah and the kingdom of God on earth.

- Interesting pointless fact -- Jesus was actually born in 6 BC. There was a calculation error when the calendar was set up.

- Few hard facts are known of his early life. There is a lot of speculation and diverse accounts that are all but impossible to verify, but very little is known for certain.

- Two of the gospels make no mention whatsoever of his virgin birth, his childhood, or his youth.

- Jesus revolutionized the religion of the time. His teachings were very different from the organized faith of the time, and he was the first to introduce the ‘turn the other cheek’ philosophy.
- He quickly gathered a large following, including the twelve famous Disciples, through traveling the land, preaching, and supposedly performing miracles such as healing the sick.
- The Crucifixion
 - Then, the local government thought that he was too much of a risk and would bring the Romans down upon them, so he was betrayed and handed over to the Roman authorities.
 - He was then tortured, beaten publicly, and executed by crucifixion.
 - His body was taken down and buried by his Disciples.
- The Resurrection
 - The story goes that his body disappeared from his tomb, and he appeared in visions to his followers, telling them to go forth, preach in his name, and whatnot.
- The Persecution
 - For years, the Romans tried to stamp out this new religion through arrests, executions, and exile.
 - However, this only served to fuel the uprising.
- Saul
 - Saul worked against Christianity for a long time, helping the Romans to hunt down Christian sects.
 - Then he supposedly was struck down by a vision of Jesus that came to him in the desert, and instantly converted.
 - He ended up making quite a large difference in the way people thought about Christianity.
- The Gospels
 - As time went on and more and more people who had not known Jesus in person converted to the religion, those who had (namely,

the Disciples) decided that source material should be made.

■ The Greeks

- As time went on and Rome developed into the base of power for Christianity, the religion spread and, as spreading religions are wont to do, diversified.
- Eventually, people in the east decided they didn't like the way the pope was running things, and split off to form the Greek Orthodox church.

■ Pagan Practices

- As it expanded, Christianity absorbed many of the local practices it encountered.
- The holy sacrament, for instance, was heavily influenced by the rituals of the cults of Isis and Horus.
- Also Christmas, Easter, and a host of other things too numerous to list here.

■ The Trinity

- The whole idea of the Trinity emerged from the Greeks.
- They were bothered by the duality of Jesus -- the whole 'God yet man' thing.
- From their speculation and rumination, three primary groups emerged:
 - Jesus is God -- the two are one and the same, and Jesus was merely his manifestation on earth
 - Jesus is a divine being, but separate from and subordinate to God
 - Jesus is a human chosen by God to act as a harbinger of sorts
- It was from these three that others put together the idea of the Trinity -- the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

■ Salvation

- The main driving force behind the spread of Christianity was the promise of salvation.
- What's more, salvation at the hands of the very being who created the universe -- a divine clean slate.
- And at a cheap price, too; all you had to do was believe in God and accept Jesus as your savior!

○ Islam

■ Mohammed

- Born in 570 AD
- His early life was apparently very hard. He lost his parents at a young age and was raised by other relatives.
- Not in the best economic situation, he was forced to find work as a camel driver and went on long trips with caravans to such places as Syria and Egypt.
 - During this time, he learned many of the things that would form the basis of his later beliefs
- Then he got married to one of his clients, a rich widow from Mecca named Khadijah
 - The two of them were apparently quite happy together, and it was her who gave him the stability and support he needed
- Now secure financially, he spent a lot of his time thinking and pondering on a nearby mountain, where he reportedly had many visions.
 - Apparently, there is evidence that he might have suffered from epileptic seizures
 - If true, it is likely that this was the source of his mysterious visions
- In one of these visions, he heard a voice calling him to be a prophet. He assumed this to be the voice of God.
- He confided in his wife about it, and surprisingly, she believed him.

- It was largely because of her support that he reached out to his friends about it and started gathering a following.
- When he went public, there was instant opposition for political and economic reasons.
 - Mainly, a lot of Mecca's wealth came from the pilgrimages made to the shrines to various spirits and deities throughout the city
 - So everyone who was making money off those shrines hated Mohammed for trying to devalue the gods the shrines were dedicated to
 - The only reasons nobody tried to kill him sooner than they did were:
 - Mecca was a sacred city and there were prohibitions against violence
 - His uncle was very influential
 - Due to this pressure, he even made a temporary concession, claiming to have had a vision in which it was revealed to him that worship at these other shrines was still allowed
 - Then he had a conflict of conscience and recanted, going back to his 'one god' spiel
- A side-note; Mohammed never really created anything new.
 - He just took bits and pieces from existing religions and mythologies and formed them into new patterns
 - For instance, Allah already existed as a deity in the middle-east
 - Mohammed just eliminated the other gods, and promoted Allah as the one and only
 - (Like what Jeremiah did with Judaism)
- After leaving Mecca in search of friendlier places, failing stupendously, and returning (with conditions), he was summoned to Medina to help resolve an authoritarian dispute that was going

on.

- After a year of thought, he agreed.
 - Then there was an attempt on his life for it.
 - However, he and a close friend escaped, in a flight known as the Hegira, which became a very important date in Islam.
 - Khadijah had died before he left, however, and his personal life started to fall apart because of it.
 - During his time in Medina, he started acting more like a politician or governor than a religious leader
 - He started using his visions for legal purposes, or in direct response to problems he faced
 - Then he started running out of money, and turned to raiding the caravans of his rivals.
 - After one particularly notorious raid during the sacred month of pilgrimage (when all caravans were supposed to be safe), he justified the violence by saying essentially that yes, it was a bad thing to do, but to obstruct the way of God would be worse.
 - This provided justification for the followers of Islam to use violence to enforce God's will
 - From this point on, violence and warfare start playing a much larger role in the spread of Islam
 - Then followed ten years of basically constant war before Mohammed died.
- The Five Teachings
- The oneness of God
 - There is no God but Allah
 - The Prophets
 - All of the Biblical prophets are recognized by Islam, but Mohammed is considered the most important -- the one who finally got it all right
 - The sacred book

- They have respect for the Bible, but their final authority is the Koran
- They believe that the Koran was written before the creation of the world by Allah himself, and was given piece by piece to Mohammed by the angel Gabriel
- Angels
 - There is only one God, but there are lots of intermediary beings (such as the aforementioned angel)
- A day of judgment and a future life
 - Similar to the Christian belief of judgment day
- The Five Practices
 - The repetition of the creed
 - “There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet”
 - Repeated over and over, all the time
 - The practice of prayer
 - Five times a day, every day, no matter where you are or what you’re doing
 - A full month each year for fasting
 - The month of Ramadan
 - Interestingly enough, eating is allowed at night during this month
 - The practice of almsgiving
 - Taxes / tithes to the religion
 - The pilgrimage to Mecca
 - Perhaps the most important thing (religiously speaking) that a Muslim will do in their life
 - Travel to the holy city, do a lot of odd ritual stuff, and most importantly, try to touch or kiss the black rock from heaven